Bixiou unblushingly produced a pair of lady's slippers

Honoré De Balzac

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THE UNCONSCIOUS MUMMERS
FACINO CANE
AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR
A PRINCESS'S SECRETS
THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE
LOUIS LAMBERT MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS

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THE UNCONSCIOUS MUMMERS

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To M. le Comte Jules de Castellane.

LÉON DE LORA, the famous French landscape painter, belongs to one of the noblest families of Roussillon. The Loras came originally from Spain; and while they are distinguished for their ancient lineage, for the last century they have faithfully kept up the traditions of the hidalgo's proverbial poverty. Léon himself came up to Paris on foot from his department of the Pyrénées-Orientales with the sum of eleven francs in his pocket for all viaticum; and in some sort forgot the hardships of childhood and the poverty at home in the later hardships which a young dauber never lacks when his whole fortune consists in an intrepid vocation. Afterwards the absorbing cares brought by fame and success still further helped him to forget.

If you have followed the tortuous and capricious course of these studies, you may perhaps recollect one of the heroes of *Un Début dans la Vie,* Schinner's pupil, Mistigris, who reappears from time to time in various Scenes.

You would not recognize the frisky, penniless dauber in the landscape painter of 1845, the rival of Hobbema, Ruysdael, and Claude Lorrain. Lora is a great man. He lives near his old master Hippolyte Schinner in a charming house (his own property) in the Rue de Berlin, not very far from the Hôtel de Brambourg, where his friend Bridau lives. He is a member of the Institut and an officer of the Legion of Honor, he has twenty thousand francs a year, his work fetches its weight in gold; and, fact even more extraordinary (as he thinks) than the invitations to Court balls which he sometimes receives—the fame of a name published abroad over Europe by the press for the last sixteen years at length reached the valley in the Pyrénées-Orientales, where three Loras of the old stock were vegetating—to wit, his elder

brother, his father, and a paternal aunt, Mlle. Urraca y Lora.

On the mother's side no relatives remained to the painter save a cousin, aged fifty, living in a little manufacturing town in the department, but that cousin was the first to remember Léon. So far back as 1840 Léon de Lora received a letter from M. Sylvestre Palafox-Castel-Gazonal (usually known as plain Gazonal), to which letter Lora replied that he really was himself—that is to say, that he really was the son of the late Léonie Gazonal, wife of Comte Fernand Didas y Lora.

Upon this, in the summer of 1841, Cousin Sylvestre Gazonal went to apprise the illustrious but obscure house of Lora of the fact that young Léon had not sailed for the River Plate, nor was he dead, as they supposed; but he was one of the finest geniuses of the modern French school—which they refused to believe. The elder brother, Don Juan de Lora, told his cousin Gazonal that he, Gazonal, had been hoaxed by some Parisian wag.

Time went on, and the said Gazonal found himself involved in a lawsuit, which the prefect for the Pyrénées-Orientales summarily stopped on a question of disputed jurisdiction and transferred to the Council of State. Gazonal proposed to himself to go to Paris to watch his case, and at the same time to clear up this matter, and to call the Parisian painter to account for his impertinence. To this end, M. Gazonal sallied forth from his furnished lodgings in the Rue Croix des Petits Champs, and was astonished at the sight of the palace in the Rue de Berlin; and, learning on inquiry that its owner was traveling in Italy, renounced for the time being the intention of asking him for satisfaction. His mind misgave him whether the great man would consent to own his mother's nephew.

Through 1843 and 1844 Gazonal followed the fortunes of his lawsuit. The local authorities, supported by the riparian owners, proposed to remove a weir on the river. The very existence of Gazonal's factory was threatened. In 1845 he looked on the case as lost beyond hope. The secretary of the Master of Requests, who drew up the report, told

him in confidence that it was unfavorable to his claims, and his own barrister confirmed the news. Gazonal, at home a commandant of the National Guard, and as shrewd a manufacturer as you would find in his department, in Paris felt so utterly insignificant, and found the cost of living so high, that he kept close in his shabby lodging.

The child of the South, deprived of the sun, poured maledictions upon Paris, that "rheumatism factory," as he called it; and when he came to reckon up the expenses of his stay, vowed to himself to poison the prefect or to "minotaurize" him on his return. In gloomier moments he slew the prefect outright; then he cheered up a little, and contented himself with "minotaurizing" the culprit.

One morning after breakfast, inwardly storming, he snatched the newspaper up savagely, and the following lines caught his eye at the end of a paragraph: "Our great landscape painter, Léon de Lora, returned from Italy a month ago. He is sending a good deal of his work to the Salon this year, so we may look forward to a very brilliant exhibition——" The words rang in Gazonal's ears like the inner voice which tells the gambler that he will win. With Southern impetuosity, Gazonal dashed out of the house, hailed a cab, and went to his cousin's house in the Rue de Berlin.

Léon de Lora happened to be engaged at the moment, but he sent a message asking his relative to breakfast with him next day at the Café de Paris. Gazonal, like a man of the South, poured out his woes to the valet.

Next morning, overdressed for the occasion in a coat of corn-cockle blue, with gilt buttons, a frilled shirt, white waistcoat, and yellow kid gloves, Gazonal fidgeted up and down the boulevard for an hour and a half, after learning from the *cafétier* (so provincials call the proprietor of a café) that gentlemen usually breakfasted between eleven and twelve.

"About half-past eleven," so he used to tell the story afterwards to everybody at home, "two Parisians in plain surtouts, looking like nobodies, came along the boulevard,

and cried out as soon as they saw me, 'Here comes your Gazonal!——'"

The second comer was Bixiou, brought on purpose to "draw out" Léon's cousin.

"And then," he would continue, "young Léon hugged me in his arms and cried, 'Do not be cross, dear cousin; I am very much yours.'—The breakfast was sumptuous. I rubbed my eyes when I saw so many gold pieces put down on the bill. These fellows must be making their weight in gold, for my cousin gave the waiter thirty *sols*—a whole day's wages!"

Over that monster breakfast, in the course of which they consumed six dozen Ostend oysters, half a dozen cutlets *à la* Soubise, a chicken *à la* Marengo, a lobster mayonnaise, mushrooms on toast, and green peas, to say nothing of *hors d'œuvres*, washed down with three bottles of bordeaux, three of champagne, several cups of coffee and liqueurs, Gazonal launched forth into magnificent invective on the subject of Paris. The noble manufacturer complained of the length of the four-pound loaves, of the height of the houses, of the callous indifference towards each other displayed by the passers-by, of the cold, of the rain, of the fares charged by the "demifiacres"—and all so amusingly, that the pair of artists warmed towards him and asked for the story of his lawsuit.

"The histor-r-ry of my lawsuit," said he, rolling his r's and accentuating every word in Provençal fashion, "the histor-r-ry of my lawsuit is quite simple. They want my factory. I find a fool of a barrister, I give him twenty francs every time to keep his eyes open, and always find him fast asleep. He is a shell-less snail that rolls about in a carriage while I go on foot. They have swindled me shamefully; I do nothing but go from one to another, and I see that I ought to have gone in a carriage. They will not look at you here unless you hide yourself out of sight in a carriage. On the other hand, in the Council of State they are a pack of do-nothings that leave a set of little rascals in our prefect's pay to do their work for them. . . . That is the history of my lawsuit. They want my factory! *É bé!*

they will get it. . . . And they can fight it out with my workpeople, a hundred strong, that will give them a cudgeling which will make them change their minds——"

"Come now, cousin, how long have you been here?" inquired the landscape painter.

"For two whole years. Oh that prefect and his 'disputed jurisdiction,' he shall pay dear for it; I will have his life, and give mine for it at the Assize Court——"

"Which councilor is chairman of your committee?"

"An ex-journalist, not worth ten *sols*, though they call him Massol."

Lora and Bixiou exchanged glances.

"And the commissioner?"

"Funnier still! It is a Master of Requests, a professor of something or other at the Sorbonne; he used to write for some review. I p-r-rofess the deepest disrespect for him——"

"Claude Vignon?" suggested Bixiou.

"That is the name—Massol and Vignon, that is the style of the unstable firm of bandits (*Trestaillons*) in league with my prefect."

"There is hope for it yet," said Léon de Lora. "You can do anything, you see, in Paris, cousin—anything, good or bad, just or unjust. Anything can be done or undone, or done over again here."

"I will be hanged if I will stop in it for another ten seconds; it is the dullest place in France."

As he spoke, the three were pacing up and down that stretch of asphalt on which you can scarcely walk of an afternoon without meeting somebody whose name has been proclaimed from Fame's trumpet, for good or ill. The ground shifts. Once it used to be the Place Royale, then the Pont Neuf possessed a privilege transferred in our day to the Boulevard des Italiens.

The landscape painter held forth for his cousin's benefit. "Paris," said he, "is an instrument which a man must learn to play. If we stop here for ten minutes, I will give you a lesson. There! look," he continued, raising his cane to point out a couple that issued from the Passage de l'Opéra.

"What is it?" inquired Gazonal.

"It" was an elderly woman dressed in a very showy gown, a faded tartan shawl, and a bonnet that had spent six months in a shop window. Her face told of a twenty years' residence in a damp porter's lodge, and her bulging market-basket showed no less clearly that the ex-portress had not improved her social position. By her side walked a slim and slender damsel. Her eyes, shaded with dark lashes, had lost their expression of innocence, her complexion was spoiled with overwork, but her features were prettily cut, her face was fresh, her hair looked thick, her brows pert and engaging, her figure lacked fullness—in two words, it was a green apple.

"It," answered Bixiou, "is a 'rat' equipped with her mother."

"A r-r-rat? *Quésaco?*"

Léon favored Mlle. Ninette with a little friendly nod.

"The 'rat' may win your lawsuit for you," he said. Gazonal started, but Bixiou had him by the arm. It had struck him as they left the café that the Southern countenance was a trifle flushed.

"The rat has just come from a rehearsal at the Opéra. It is on its way home to its scanty dinner. In three hours' time it will come back to dress, if it comes on this evening in the ballet, that is, for to-day is Monday. The rat has reached the age of thirteen; it is an old rat already. In two years' time the creature's market-price will be sixty thousand francs; she will be everything or nothing, a great dancer or a super, she will have a name in the world or she will be a common prostitute. Her working life began at the age of eight. Such as you see her to-day she is exhausted; she overtired herself this morning at the dancing class, she has just come out of a rehearsal as full of head-splitting ins and outs as a Chinese puzzle; and she will come back again to-night. The rat is one of the foundation stones of the Opéra; the rat is to the leading lady of the ballet as the little clerk is to the notary. The rat is Hope."

"Who brings the rat into the world?" asked Gazonal.

"Porters, poor folk, actors, and dancers," said Bixiou. "Nothing but the direst poverty could induce an eight-year-old child to bear such torture of feet and joints, to lead

a well-conducted life till she is sixteen or eighteen years old (simply as a business speculation), and to keep a hideous old woman always with her like stable-litter about some choice plant.—You will see genius of every kind go past—artists in the bud and artists run to seed—all of them engaged in rearing that ephemeral monument to the glory of France called the Opéra; a daily renewed combination of physical and mental strength, will and genius, found nowhere but in Paris."

"I have already seen the Opéra," Gazonal remarked with a self-sufficient air.

"Yes, from your bench at three francs sixty centimes, as you have seen Paris from the Rue Croix des Petits Champs —without knowing anything about it. What did they give at the Opéra when you went?"

"*William Tell.*"

"Good," returned Léon, "you must have enjoyed Mathilde's great duet. Well, what do you suppose the prima donna did as soon as she went off the stage?"

"Did?—What?"

"Sat down to two mutton cutlets, underdone, which her servant had prepared for her——"

"Ah! *bouffre!*"

"Malibran kept herself up with brandy—it was that that killed her. Now for something else. You have seen the ballet; now you have just seen the ballet go past in plain morning dress, not knowing that your lawsuit depends upon those feet?"

"My lawsuit?"

"There, cousin, there goes a *marcheuse*, as she is called." Léon pointed out one of the superb creatures that have lived sixty years of life at five-and-twenty; a beauty so unquestioned, so certain to be sought, that she keeps in the shade. She was tall, she walked well, with a dandy's assured air, and her toilette was striking by reason of its ruinous simplicity.

"That is Carabine," said Bixiou, as he and the painter nodded slightly, and Carabine answered with a smile.

"There goes another who can cashier your prefect."

"A *marcheuse* is often a very handsome 'rat' sold by her

real or pretended mother so soon as it is certain that she can neither rank as a first, nor second, nor third-rate dancer; or else she prefers her calling of *coryphée* to any other, perhaps because she has spent her youth in learning to dance and knows how to do nothing else. She met no doubt with rebuffs at the minor theaters; she cannot hope to succeed in the three French cities which maintain a *corps de ballet*, she has no money, or no wish to go abroad, for you must know that the great Paris school trains dancers for the rest of the civilized world. If a rat becomes a *marcheuse*, that is to say, a *figurante*, she must have had some weighty reason for staying in Paris—some rich man whom she did not love, that is to say, or a poor young fellow whom she loved too well. The one that passed just now will dress or undress three times in an evening as a princess, a peasant-girl, a Tyrolese, and the like, and gets perhaps two hundred francs a month."

"She is better dressed than our pr-r-refect's wife."

"If you went to call on her, you would find a maid, a cook, and a manservant in her splendid establishment in the Rue Saint-Georges," said Bixiou. "But, after all, as modern incomes are to the revenues of the eighteenth century noblesse, so is she to the eighteenth century Opéra girl, a mere wreck of former greatness. Carabine is a power in the land. At this moment she rules du Tillet, a banker with a good deal of influence in the Chamber——"

"And the higher ranks of the ballet, how about them?"

"Look!" said Lora, pointing out an elegant carriage which crossed the boulevard and disappeared down the Rue de la Grange-Batelière, "there goes one of our leading ladies of the ballet; put her name on the placards, and she will draw all Paris; she is making sixty thousand francs per annum, she lives like a princess. The price of your factory would not buy you the right of wishing her a good-morning thirty times."

"*Eh bé!* I can easily say it to myself; it will cost less."

"Do you see that good-looking young man on the front seat? He is a viscount bearing a great name, and he is her first gentleman of the chamber; he arranges with the news-

papers for her; he carries peace or declares war of a morning on the manager of the Opéra; or he makes it his business to superintend the applause when she comes on or off the stage."

"My good sirs, this beats everything; I had not a suspicion of Paris as it is."

"Oh well, at any rate you may as well find out what may be seen in ten minutes in the Passage de l'Opéra.—There!" exclaimed Bixiou.

Two persons, a man and a woman, came out as he spoke. The woman was neither pretty nor plain; there was a certain distinction that revealed the artist in the fashion and color of her gown. The man looked rather like a minor canon.

"That is a double-bass and a *second premier sujet*," continued Bixiou. "The double-bass is a tremendous genius; but the double-bass, being a mere accessory in the score, scarcely makes as much as the dancer. The *second sujet* made a great name before Taglioni and Elssler appeared; she preserved the traditions of the character dance among us; she would have been in the first rank to-day if the other two had not come to reveal undreamed-of poetry in the dance; as it is, she is only in the second rank, and yet she draws her thirty thousand francs, and has a faithful friend in a peer of France with great influence in the Chamber. Look! here comes the third-rate dancer, a dancer that owes her (professional) existence to the omnipotent press. If her engagement had not been renewed, the men in office would have had one more enemy on their backs. The *corps de ballet* is the great power at the Opéra; for which reason, in the upper ranks of dandyism and politics, it is much better form to make a connection among the dancers than among the singers. 'Monsieur goes in for music,' is a kind of joke among the frequenters of the Opéra in the orchestra."

A short, ordinary-looking, plainly-dressed man went past.

"At last here comes the other half of the receipts—the tenor. There is no poetry, no music, no acting possible without a famous tenor that can take a certain high note. The tenor means the element of love, a voice that reaches the heart, that thrills the soul; and when this voice

resolves itself into figures, it means a larger income than a cabinet minister's. A hundred thousand francs for a throat, a hundred thousand for a pair of ankles—behold the two financial scourges of the Opéra."

"It fills me with amazement to see so many hundred thousand francs walking about," said Gazonal.

"You will soon see a great deal more, dear cousin of mine. Come with us.—We will take Paris as an artist takes up the violoncello, and show you how to play the great instrument, show you how we amuse ourselves in Paris in fact."

"It is a kaleidoscope seven leagues round," cried Gazonal.

"Before we begin to pilot this gentleman, I must see Gaillard," began Bixiou.

"And Gaillard may help us in the cousin's affairs."

"What is the new scene?"

"It is not a scene, but a scene-shifter. Gaillard is a friend of ours; he has come at last to be the managing director of a newspaper; his character, like his cash-box, is chiefly remarkable for its tidal ebb and flood. Gaillard possibly may help to win your lawsuit."

"It is lost——"

"Just the time to win it then!" returned Bixiou.

Arrived at Théodore Gaillard's house in the Rue de Ménars, the friends were informed by the footman that his master was engaged. It was a private interview.

"With whom?" inquired Bixiou.

"With a man that is driving a bargain to imprison a debtor that cannot be caught," said a voice, and a very handsome woman appeared in a dainty morning gown.

"In that case, dear Suzanne, the rest of us may walk in——"

"Oh! what a lovely creature!" cried Gazonal.

"That is Mme. Gaillard," said Léon de Lora; and, lowering his voice for his cousin's ear, he added, "You see before you, dear fellow, as modest a woman as you will find in Paris; she has retired from public life, and is contented with one husband."

"What can I do for you, my lords?" said the facetious managing director, imitating Frédéric Lemaître.

Théodore Gaillard had been a clever man; but, as so often happens in Paris, he had grown stupid with staying too long in the same groove. The principal charm of his conversation consisted in tags of quotation with which it was garnished, bits from popular plays mouthed after the manner of some well-known actor.

"We have come for a chat," said Léon.

"*Encôre, jeûne hôme!*" (Odry in *Les Saltimbanques.*)

"This time we shall have him for certain," said Gaillard's interlocutor by way of conclusion.

"Are you quite sure of that, Daddy Fromenteau? This is the eleventh time that we have had him fast at night, and in the morning he was gone."

"What can you do? I never saw such a debtor. He is like a locomotive, he goes to sleep in Paris and wakes up in Seine-et-Oise. He is a puzzle for a locksmith."

Seeing Gaillard smile, he added, "That is how we talk in our line. You 'nab' a man, or you lock him up; that means you arrest him. They talk differently in the criminal police. Vidocq used to say to his man, 'They have got it ready for you!' which was all the funnier because 'it' meant the guillotine."

Bixiou jogged Gazonal's elbow, and at once the visitor became all eyes and ears. "Does monsieur give palm oil?" continued Fromenteau, quite quietly, though there was a perceptible shade of menace in the tone.

"It is a matter of fifty centimes," said Gaillard (a reminiscence of Odry in *Les Saltimbanques*), as he handed over five francs to Fromenteau.

"And for the blackguards?" the man went on.

"Who are they?"

"Those in my employ," Fromenteau replied imperturbably.

"Is there anyone lower yet?" asked Bixiou.

"Oh yes, sir," the detective replied. "There are some that give us information unconsciously and get no pay for it. I put flats and noodles lower than blackguards."

"The blackguards are often very good-looking and clever," exclaimed Léon.

"Then do you belong to the police?" asked Gazonal, un-

easily and curiously eying this little wizened, impassive person, dressed like a solicitor's under clerk.

"Which kind do you mean?" returned Fromenteau.

"Are there several kinds?"

"As many as five," said Fromenteau. "There is the Criminal Department (Vidocq used to be at the head of it); the Secret Superintendence (no one knows the chief); the Political Department (Fouché's own); and the Château, the system directly in the employ of the Emperor and Louis XVIII., and so on. The Château was always squabbling with the other department at the Quai Malaquais. That came to an end with M. Decazes. I used to belong to Louis XVIII.; I have been in the force ever since 1793 along with poor Contenson."

The listeners looked at one another, each with one thought in their minds—"How many men's heads has he cut off?"

"And now they want to do without us—tomfoolery!" added the little man that had grown so terrific all on a sudden. "Since 1830 they will only employ respectable people at the prefecture; I sent in my resignation, and learned my little knack of nabbing prisoners for debt."

"He is the right hand of the commercial police," said Gaillard, lowering his voice for Bixiou; "but you can never tell whether debtor or creditor pays him most."

"The dirtier the business, the more need for strict honesty," said Fromenteau sententiously; "I am for those that pay best. You want to recover fifty thousand francs, and you higgle over farthings. Give me five hundred francs, and to-morrow morning we will have him in quod."

"Five hundred francs for you yourself!" cried Théodore Gaillard.

"'Lisette wants a shawl,'" answered the detective, without moving a muscle of his countenance. "I call her 'Lisette' because of Béranger."

"You have a Lisette, and still you stay in your line!" cried the virtuous Gazonal.

"It is so amusing. Talk of field sports; it is far more interesting to run a man to earth in Paris!"

"They must be uncommonly clever to do it, and that is a fact," said Gazonal, thinking aloud.

"Oh, if I were to reckon up all the qualities that a man needs if he is to make his mark in our line, you would think I was describing a man of genius," replied Fromenteau, taking Gazonal's measure at a glance. "You must be lynx-eyed, must you not? Bold—for you must drop into a house like a bombshell, walk up to people as if you had known them all your life, and propose the never-refused dirty business, and so on.—You must have Memory, Sagacity, Invention—for you must be quick to think of expedients, and never repeat yourself; espionage must always be molded on the individual character of those with whom you have to do—but invention is a gift of Heaven. Then you need agility, strength, and so on. All these faculties, gentlemen, are painted up over the door of Amoros's Gymnasium as virtues. All these things we must possess under penalty of forfeiting the salary of a hundred francs per month paid us by the Government, in the Rue de Jérusalem, or the commercial police."

"And you appear to me to be a remarkable man," said Gazonal. Fromenteau looked at him, but he neither answered nor showed any sign of feeling, and went away without taking leave, an unmistakable sign of genius.

"Well, cousin, you have just seen the police incarnate," said Léon.

"I have had quite as much as I want," returned the honest manufacturer. Gaillard and Bixiou chatted together meanwhile in an undertone.

"I will send round an answer to-night to Carabine's," Gaillard said aloud; and sitting down to his desk, he took no further notice of Gazonal.

"Insolence!" fumed the child of the South on the threshold.

"His paper has twenty-two thousand subscribers," said Léon de Lora. "He is one of the great powers of the age; he has not time to be polite of a morning."

"If go we must to the Chamber to arrange this lawsuit, let us take the longest way round," said Léon.

"Great men's sayings are like silver gilt," retorted Bixiou; "use wears the gilt off the silver, and all the sparkle goes out of the sayings if they are repeated. But where are we going?"

"To see our hatter near by," returned Léon.

"Bravo! If we go on like this, we may perhaps have some fun."

"Gazonal," began Léon, "I will draw him out for your benefit. Only—you must look as solemn as a king on a five-franc piece, for you are going to see *gratis* an uncommonly queer quiz; the man's self-importance has turned his head. In these days, my dear fellow, everybody wants to cover himself with glory and a good many cover themselves with ridicule, and hence we have entirely new living caricatures——"

"When everybody is glorious together, how is a man to distinguish himself?" asked Gazonal.

"Distinguish yourself?" repeated Bixiou—"be a noodle. Your cousin wears a ribbon; I am well dressed, and people look at me, not at him."

After this remark, which may perhaps explain why so many orators and other great politicians never appear in the streets with a ribbon in their buttonholes, Léon de Lora pointed out a name painted in gilt letters over a shop front. It was the illustrious name of an author of a pamphlet on hats, a person who pays newspaper proprietors as much for advertisements as any three vendors of sugar-plums or patent pills—VITAL it ran (LATE FINOT), HAT MANUFACTURER, not plain HATTER, as heretofore.

Bixiou called Gazonal's attention to the glories of the shop window. "Vital, my dear boy, is making forty thousand francs per annum."

"And he is still in business as a hatter!" exclaimed Gazonal, nearly breaking Bixiou's arm with a violent wrench.

"You shall see the man directly," added Léon; "you want a hat, you shall have one gratis."

"Is M. Vital not in?" asked Bixiou, seeing no one at the desk.

"Monsieur is correcting proofs in his private office," said the assistant.

"What do you think of that, hey?" said Léon, turning to his cousin. Then to the assistant, "Can we speak to him without disturbing his inspirations?"

"Let the gentlemen come in," called a voice—a bourgeois voice, a voice to inspire confidence in voters, a powerful voice, suggestive of a good steady income, and Vital vouchsafed to show himself. He was dressed in black from head to foot, and carried a diamond pin in his resplendent shirt-frill. Beyond him the three friends caught a glimpse of a young and pretty woman sitting at a desk with a piece of embroidery in her hands.

Vital was between thirty and forty years of age; native joviality had been repressed in him by ambitions. It is the privilege of a fine organization to be neither tall nor short, and Vital enjoyed that advantage. He was tolerably stout, and careful of his appearance; and if the hair had grown rather thin on his forehead, he turned the partial baldness to account, to give himself the airs of a man consumed by thought. You could see by the way that his wife looked at him that she admired her husband for a great man and a genius. Vital loved artists. Not that he had himself any taste for the arts, but he felt that he was one of the confraternity; he believed that he was an artist, and brought the fact home to you by sedulously disclaiming all right to that noble title, and constantly relegating himself to an enormous distance from the arts to draw out the remark, "Why, you have raised the manufacture of hats to the dignity of a science."

"Have you found the hat for me at last?" inquired Léon de Lora.

"What, sir, in one fortnight! A hat for *you!*" remonstrated Vital. "Why, two months will scarcely be long enough to strike out a shape to suit you! Look, here is your lithograph, there it lies. I have studied you very carefully already. I would not take so much trouble for a prince, but you are something more, you are an artist. And you understand me, my dear sir."

"Here is one of our great inventors; he would be as great a man as Jacquart if he would but consent to die for a bit," said Bixiou, introducing Gazonal. "Our friend here is a cloth weaver, the inventor of a way of restoring the indigo color in old clothes; he wanted to see you as a great phenomenon, for it was you who said, 'The hat is the man.' It sent this gentleman into ecstasies. Ah! Vital, you have faith! You believe in something; you have a passion for your work!"

Vital scarcely heard the words, his face had grown pale with joy.

"Rise, wife. This gentleman is one of the princes of science!"

Mme. Vital rose at a sign from her husband; Gazonal bowed.

"Shall I have the honor of finding a hat for you?" continued Vital, radiant and officious.

"At my price," said Bixiou.

"Quite so. I ask nothing but the pleasure of an occasional mention from you, gentlemen. Monsieur must have a picturesque hat, something in M. Lousteau's style," he continued, looking at Bixiou with the air of one laying down the law. "I will think of a shape."

"You take a great deal of trouble," said Gazonal.

"Oh! only for a few persons; only for those who can appreciate the value of the pains that I take. Why, among the aristocracy there is but one man who really understands a hat—the Prince de Béthune. How is it that men do not see, as women do, that the hat is the first thing to strike the eye? Why do they not think of changing the present state of things, which is disgraceful, it must be said. But a Frenchman, of all people, is the most persistent in his folly. I quite know the difficulties, gentlemen! I am not speaking now of my writings on a subject which I believe I have approached in a philosophical spirit; but simply as a practical hatter I have discovered the means of individualizing the hideous headgear which Frenchmen are privileged to wear until I can succeed in abolishing it altogether."

He held up an example of the hideous modern hat.

"Behold the enemy, gentlemen. To think that the most intelligent nation under the sun should consent to put this 'stove-pipe' (as one of our own writers has said), this 'stove-pipe' upon their heads! . . . Here you see the various curves which I have introduced into those dreadful lines," he added, pointing out one of his own "creations." "Yet, although I understand how to suit the hat to the wearer—as you see, for here is a doctor's hat, this is for a tradesman, and that for a dandy or an artist, a stout man, a thin man—still, the hat in itself is always hideous. There! do you fully grasp my whole idea?"

He took up a broad-brimmed hat with a low crown.

"This is an old hat belonging to Claude Vignon, the great critic, independent writer, and free liver. . . . He has gone to the support of the ministry, he is a professor and librarian, he only writes for the *Débats* now, he has gained the post of Master of Requests. He has an income of sixteen thousand francs, he makes four thousand francs by his journalistic work, he wears a ribbon at his buttonhole.—Well, here is his new hat."

Vital exhibited a head covering, the *juste milieu* visible in every line.

"You ought to have made him a harlequin's hat," exclaimed Gazonal.

"Your genius rises over other people's heads, M. Vital," said Léon.

Vital bowed, unsuspicious of the joke.

"Can you tell me why your shops are the last of all to close here in Paris? They are open even later than the cafés and drinking bars. It really tickles my curiosity," said Gazonal.

"In the first place, our windows look their best when lighted up at night; and for one hat that we sell in the daytime, we sell five at night."

"Everything is queer in Paris," put in Léon.

"Well, in spite of my efforts and my success" (Vital pursued his panegyric), "we must come to the round crown. I am working in that direction."

"What hinders you?" asked Gazonal.

"Cheapness, sir. You start with a stock of fine silk hats at fifteen francs—the price would kill the trade; Parisians never have fifteen francs of ready money to invest in a new hat. A beaver costs thirty francs, but the problem is the same as ever. Beaver, I say, though there are not ten pounds' weight of real beaver skins bought in France in a year. The article is worth three hundred and fifty francs per pound, and an ounce is needed for a hat. And besides, the beaver hat is not good for much, the skin dyes badly; it turns rusty in the sunshine in ten minutes, it subsides at once in the heat. What we call 'beaver' is really nothing but hare-skin; the best hats are made from the backs, the second quality from the sides, and the third from the bellies. I am telling you trade secrets, you are men of honor. But whether you carry beaver or hare-skin on your head, the problem is equally insoluble—how to find fifteen or thirty francs of ready money. A man must pay cash for his hat—you behold the consequences! The honor of the garb of Gaul will be saved when a round gray hat shall cost a hundred francs. When that day comes we shall give credit, like the tailors. To that end people must be persuaded to wear the buckle, the gold galoon, the plumes, and satin-lined brims of the times of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. Our business would expand ten times over if we went into the fancy line. France would be the hat-mart of the world, just as Paris always sets the fashion in women's dress. The present hat may be made anywhere. Ten million francs of export trade to be secured for Paris is involved in the question——"

"A revolution!" cried Bixiou, working up enthusiasm.

"Yes, a radical revolution. The form must be remodeled."

"You are happy after Luther's fashion," said Léon, always on the lookout for a pun. "You are dreaming of a reformation."

"Yes, sir. Ah! if the twelve or fifteen artists, capitalists, or dandies that set the fashion would but have courage for twenty-four hours, there would be a great commercial victory won for France. See here! as I tell my wife, I would give my fortune to succeed. Yes, it is my one ambition to regenerate the hat—and to disappear."

"The man is stupendous," remarked Gazonal, when they had left the shop, "but all your eccentrics have a touch of the South about them, I do assure you——"

"Let us go along the Rue Saint-Marc," said Bixiou.

"Are we to see something else?"

"Yes, you are going to see a money-lender—a money-lender among the 'rats' and *marcheuses*. A woman that has more hideous secrets in her keeping than gowns in her shop window," said Bixiou.

He pointed as he spoke to a dirty-looking shop like a blot on the dazzling expanse of modern street. It had last been painted somewhere about the year 1820, a subsequent bankruptcy must have left it in a dubious condition on the owner's hands, and now the color was obscured by a thick coating of grime and dust. The windows were filthy, the door handle had that significant trick of turning of its own accord, characteristic of every place which people enter in a hurry, only to leave more promptly still.

"What do you say to this? Death's cousin-german, is she not?" Léon muttered in Gazonal's ear, pointing out a terrific figure behind the counter. "She is Mme. Nourrisson."

"How much for the guipure, madame?" asked Gazonal, not to be behindhand.

"To you, monsieur, only a hundred crowns, as you come from so far." Then remarking a certain Southern start of surprise, she added, with a touch of pathos in her voice, "It belonged to the Princesse de Lamballe, poor thing."

"What! here! right under the Tuileries?" cried Bixiou.

"Monsieur, 'they' don't believe it," said she.

"We did not come here as buyers, madame," Bixiou began valiantly.

"So I see, monsieur," retorted Mme. Nourrisson.

"We have several things to sell," continued the illustrious caricaturist. "I live at No. 112 Rue de Richelieu, sixth floor. If you like to look in, in a moment, you may pick up a famous bargain——"

"Perhaps monsieur would like a bit of muslin; it is very much worn just now?" smiled she.

"No. It is a matter of a wedding-dress," Léon de Lora said with much gravity.

Fifteen minutes later, Mme. Nourrisson actually appeared at Bixiou's rooms. Léon and Gazonal had come home with him to see the end of the jest, and Mme. Nourrisson found the trio looking as sober as three authors whose work (written in collaboration) has not met with that success which it deserved.

Bixiou unblushingly produced a pair of lady's slippers. "These, madame, belonged to the Empress Josephine," said he, giving Mme. Nourrisson, as in duty bound, the small change for her Princesse de Lamballe.

"*That?* . . ." cried she. "Why, it was new this year; look at the mark on the sole."

"Can you not guess that the pair of slippers is a prelude to the romance," said Léon; "and not, as usual, the sequel?"

"My friend here from the South," put in Bixiou, "wishes to marry a certain young lady, very well-to-do and well connected; but he would like to know beforehand (huge family interests being at stake) whether there has been any slip in the past."

"How much is monsieur willing to pay?" she asked, eying the prospective bridegroom.

"A hundred francs," said Gazonal, no longer astonished at anything.

"Many thanks," said she, with a grimace which a monkey might despairingly envy.

"Come, now, how much do you want, Mme. Nourrisson?" asked Bixiou, putting his arm round her waist.

"First of all, my dear gentlemen, never since I have been in business have I seen anyone, man or woman, beating down the price of happiness. And, in the second place, you are all three of you chaffing me," she added, and a smile that stole over her hard lips was reënforced by a gleam of cat-like suspicion in her eyes. "Now, if your happiness is not involved, your fortune is at stake, and a man that lives up so many pair of stairs is still less the person to haggle

over a rich match.—Come, now, what is it all about, my lambs?" with sudden affability.

"We want to know about the firm of Beunier and Company," said Bixiou, very well pleased to pick up some information concerning a person in whom he was interested.

"Oh! a louis will be enough for that——"

"And why?"

"I have all the mother's jewels. She is hard up from one quarter to another; why, it is all she can do to pay interest on the money she owes me. Are you looking for a wife in that quarter? You noodle! Hand me over forty francs, and I will give you a good hundred crowns' worth of gossip."

Gazonal brought a forty-franc piece to light, and Mme. Nourrisson gave them some startling stories of the straits to which some so-called ladies are reduced. The old wardrobe-dealer grew lively as she talked, sketching her own portrait in the course of the conversation. Without betraying a single confidence, without letting fall a single name, she made her audience shudder by allowing them to see how much prosperity in Paris is based on the quaking foundation of borrowed money. In her drawers she had keepsakes set in gold and brilliants, memorials of grandmothers long dead and gone, of children still in life, of husbands or grandchildren laid in the grave. She had heard ghastly stories wrung from anger, passion, or pique, told, it may be, by one customer of another, or drawn from borrowers in the necessary course of sedative treatment which ends in a loan.

"Why did you enter this line of business?" asked Gazonal.

"For my son's sake," she replied simply.

Women that go up and down back stairs to ply their trade are always brimful of excuses based on the best of motives. Mme. Nourrisson, by her own account, had lost three matches, three daughters that turned out very badly, and all her illusions to boot. She produced pawn-tickets for some of her best goods, she said, just to show the risks of the trade. How she should meet the end of the month, she did not know; people "robbed" her to such a degree.

The word was a little too strong. The artists exchanged glances.

"Look here, boys, I will just show you how we get taken in. This did not happen to me, but to my neighbor over the way, Mme. Mahuchet, a ladies' shoemaker. I had been lending money to a Countess, a woman with more crazes than she can afford. She swaggers it with a fine house and grand furniture; she has At Homes, she makes a deuce of a dash.

"Well, she owed her shoemaker three hundred francs, and was giving a dinner and a party no further back than the day before yesterday. Mme. Mahuchet, hearing of this from the cook, came to me about it, and we got excited over the news. She was for making a fuss, but for my own part—'My dear Mother Mahuchet,' I said, 'where is the use of it? Just to get a bad name; it is better to get good security. It is diamond cut diamond, and you save your bile.'—But go she would; she asked me to back her up, and we went together.—'Madame is not at home,'—'Go on!' said Mother Mahuchet. 'We will wait for her if I stop here till midnight!'—So we camped down in the antechamber and chatted together. Well, doors opened and shut; by and by there was a sound of little footsteps and low voices; and, for my own part, I felt sorry the company was coming to dinner. You can judge of the turn things took.

"The Countess sent in her own woman to wheedle La Mahuchet—'You shall be paid to-morrow'—and all the rest of the ways of trying it on.—No go.—Then the Countess, in her Sunday best, as you may say, comes into the dining-room. La Mahuchet hears her, flings open the door, and walks in. Lord! at the sight of the dinner-table, all sparkling like a jewel-case, the dish-covers and the plate and the candle-sconces, she went off like a soda-water bottle. She flings out her bomb—'Those that spend other people's money have no business to give dinner-parties; they ought to live quietly. You a Countess! and you owe a hundred crowns to a poor shoemaker's wife with seven children!'—You can imagine how she ran on, an uneducated woman as she is. At the first word of excuse—'No money'—from the Countess, La Mahuchet cries out, 'Eh! my lady, but there is silver-plate here! Pawn your spoons and forks and pay

me!'—'Take them yourself,' says the Countess, catching up half a dozen and slipping them into her hand, and we hurried away downstairs pellmell.—What a success! Bah! no. Out in the street tears came into La Mahuchet's eyes, she is a good soul; she took the things back, and apologized. She found out the depths of the Countess's poverty—they were German silver!"

"Dishcovered that she had no cover," commented Léon de Lora, in whom the Mistigris of old was apt to reappear.

The pun flashed a sudden light across Mme. Nourrisson's brain. "Aha! my dear sir, you are an artist, a dramatic writer, you live in the Rue du Helder, you have kept company with Mme. Antonia, I know a few of your little ways! . . . Come, now, do you want something out of the common in the grand style, Carabine or Mousqueton, for instance, or Malaga or Jenny Cadine?"

"Malaga and Carabine, forsooth! when we have made them what they are!" cried Léon.

"My dear Mme. Nourrisson, I solemnly swear to you that we wanted nothing but the pleasure of making your acquaintance; and as we wish to hear about your antecedents, we should like to know how you came to drop into your way of business," said Bixiou.

"I was a confidential servant in the household of a Marshal of France," she said, posing like a Dorine; "he was the Prince d'Ysembourg. One morning one of the finest ladies at the Emperor's court came to speak privately with the Marshal. I took care at once to be within hearing. Well, my Countess bursts into tears, and tells that simpleton of a Marshal (the Prince d'Ysembourg, the Condé of the Republic, and a simpleton to boot), she tells him that her husband was away at the wars in Spain, and had left her without a single note for a thousand francs, and that unless she can have one or two at once, her children must starve, she had literally nothing for to-morrow. Well, my Marshal, being tolerably free-handed in those days, takes a couple of thousand-franc notes out of his desk.—I watched the fair Countess down the stairs. She did not see me; she was laughing to

herself with not altogether motherly glee, so I slipped out and heard her tell the *chasseur* in a low voice to drive to Leroy's. I rushed round. My mother of a family goes to the famous shop in the Rue de Richelieu—you know the place—and orders and pays for a dress that cost fifteen hundred francs. You used to pay for one dress by ordering another then. Two nights afterwards she could appear at the ambassador's ball, decked out as a woman must be when she wishes to shine for all the world and for one besides. That very day said I to myself, 'Here is an opening for me! When I am no longer young, I will lend money to fine ladies on their things; passion cannot reckon, and pays blindly.' If it is a subject for a comedy that you want, I will let you have some for a consideration——"

And making an end of a harangue, colored by all the phases of her past life, she departed, leaving Gazonal in dismay, caused partly by the matter of her discourse, but at least as much by an exhibition of five yellow teeth which she meant for a smile.

"What are we to do next?" he inquired.

"Find some banknotes," said Bixiou, whistling for his porter; "I want money, and I am going to teach you the uses of a porter. You imagine that they are meant to open doors; whereas their real use is to help vagrants like me out of difficulties, and to assist the artists whom they take under their protection, for which reason mine will take the Montyon prize some of these days."

The common expression, "eyes like saucers," found sufficient illustration in Gazonal's countenance at that moment.

The man that suddenly appeared in the doorway was of no particular age, a something between a private detective and a merchant's clerk, but more unctuous and sleeker than either; his hair was greasy, his person paunchy, his complexion of the moist and unwholesome kind that you observe in the superiors of convents. He wore a blue cloth jacket, drab trousers, and list slippers.

"What do you want, sir?" inquired this personage, with a half-patronizing, half-servile manner.

"Oh, Ravenouillet—(his name is Ravenouillet," said

Bixiou, turning to Gazonal)—"have you your 'bills receivable' about you?"

Ravenouillet felt in a side-pocket, and produced the stickiest book that Gazonal had ever seen in his life.

"Just enter a note of these two bills for five hundred francs at three months, and put your name to them for me."

Bixiou brought out a couple of notes made payable to his order as he spoke. Ravenouillet accepted them forthwith, and noted them down on the greasy page among his wife's entries of various sums due from other lodgers.

"Thanks, Ravenouillet. Stay, here is an order for the Vaudeville."

"Ah, my child will enjoy herself very much to-night," said Ravenouillet, as he went away.

"There are seventy-one of us in the house," said Bixiou; "among us, on an average, we owe Ravenouillet six thousand francs per month, eighteen thousand francs per quarter for advances and postage, to say nothing of rent. He is our Providence—at thirty per cent. We pay him that without being so much as asked."

"Oh, Paris! Paris!" exclaimed Gazonal.

"On the way," said Bixiou, filling in his signature "(for I am going to show you another actor, Cousin Gazonal, and a charming scene he shall play, *gratis*, for you)——"

"Where?" Gazonal broke in.

"In a money-lender's office. On the way, I repeat, I will tell you how friend Ravenouillet started in Paris."

As they passed the door of the lodge, Gazonal heard Mlle. Lucienne Ravenouillet, a student at the Conservatoire, practicing her scales, her father was reading the newspaper, and Mme. Ravenouillet came out with letters in her hand for the lodgers above.

"Thank you, M. Bixiou," called the little one.

"That is not a 'rat,'" said Léon; "it is a grasshopper in the larva state."

"It seems that here, as all the world over, you win the favor of those in office by good offices," began Gazonal. Léon was charmed with the pun.

"He is coming on in our society!" he cried.

"Now for Ravenouillet's history," said Bixiou, when the three stood outside on the boulevard. "In 1831 Massol (your chairman of committee, Gazonal) was a journalist barrister. At that time he merely intended to be Keeper of the Seals some day; he scorned to oust Louis-Philippe from the throne: pardon his ambition, he comes from Carcassonne. One fine morning a young fellow-countryman turned up.—'*Monsu* Massol,' he said, 'you know me very well, my father is your neighbor the grocer; I have just come from down yonder, for they tell us that everyone who comes here gets a place.' At those words a cold shiver ran through Massol. He thought within himself that if he were so ill advised as to oblige a compatriot, who for that matter was a perfect stranger, he should have the whole department tumbling in upon him. He thought of the wear and tear to bell-pulls, door hinges, and carpets, he saw his only servant giving notice, he had visions of trouble with his landlord, of complaints from the other tenants of the combined odors of garlic and *diligence* introduced into the house. So he fixed upon his petitioner such an eye as a butcher turns upon a sheep brought into the shambles. In vain. His fellow-countryman survived that gaze, or rather that stab, and continued his discourse much on this wise, according to Massol's report of it:—

"'I have my ambitions, like everyone else,' said he; 'I shall not go back again until I am rich, if indeed I go back at all, for Paris is the antechamber of Paradise. They tell me that you write for the newspapers, and do anything you like with people here, and that for you it is ask and have with the Government. I have abilities, like all of us down yonder, but I know myself: I have no education; I cannot write (which is a pity, for I have ideas); so I do not think of coming into competition with you; I know myself; I should not make anything out. But since you can do anything, and we are brothers, as you may say, having played together as children, I count upon you to give me a start in life, and to use your influence for me.—Oh, you must. I want a place, the kind of place to suit my talents, a place

that I, being I, am fitted to fill with a chance of making my fortune——'

"Massol was just on the point of brutally thrusting his fellow-countryman out at the door with a rough word in his ear, when the said countryman concluded thus:—

"'So I do not ask for a place in the civil service, where a man gets on as slowly as a tortoise, for there is your cousin that has been a tax-collector these twenty years, and is a tax-collector still—no; I simply thought of going——'—'On the stage?' put in Massol, greatly relieved by the turn things were taking.—'No. It is true, I have the figure for it, and the memory, and the gesticulation; but it takes too much out of you. I should prefer the career of a—porter.' Massol kept his countenance—'It will take far more out of you,' he said, 'but you are not so likely, at any rate, to perform to an empty house.'—So he found Ravenouillet's 'first-door-string' for him, as he says."

"I was the first to take an interest in porters as a class," said Léon. "Your moral humbugs, your charlatans from vanity, your latter-day sycophants, your Septembrists disguised in trappings of decorous solemnity, your discoverers of problems palpitating with present importance, are all preaching the emancipation of the negro, the improvement of the juvenile offender, and philanthropic efforts on behalf of the ticket-of-leave man; while they leave their porters in a worse plight than the Irish, living in dens more loathsome than dark cells, upon a scantier pittance than the Government grant per head for convicts. I have done but one good deed in my life, and that is my porter's lodge."

"Yes," said Bixiou. "Suppose that a man has built a set of huge cages, divided up like a beehive or a menagerie into hundreds of cells or dens, in which living creatures of every species are intended to ply their various industries; suppose that this animal, with the face of an owner of house-property, should come to a man of science and say—'Sir, I want a specimen of the order *Bimana*, which shall live in a sink ten feet square, filled with old boots and plague-stricken rags. I want him to live in it all his life, and rear a family of children as pretty as cherubs; he must use it as a work-

shop, kitchen, and promenade; he must sing and grow flowers in it, and never go out; he must shut his eyes, and yet see everything that goes on in the house.'—Assuredly the man of science could not invent the Porter; Paris alone, or the Devil if you like to have it so, was equal to the feat."

"Parisian industrialism has gone even further into the regions of the Impossible," added Gazonal. "You in Paris exhibit all kinds of manufactures; but there are by-products of which you know nothing. . . . There are your working classes.—They bear the brunt of competition with foreign industries, hardship against hardship, just as the regiments bore the brunt of Napoleon's duel with Europe."

"Here we are. This is where our friend Vauvinet lives," said Bixiou. "People who paint contemporary manners are too apt to copy old portraits; it is one of their greatest mistakes. In our own times every calling has been transformed. Tradesmen are peers of France, artists are capitalists, writers of vaudevilles have money in the Funds. Some few figures remain as before; but, generally speaking, most professions have dropped their manners and customs along with their distinctive dress. Gobseck, Gigonnet, Chaboisseau, and Samanon were the last of the Romans; to-day we rejoice in the possession of our Vauvinet, the good fellow, the dandy-denizen of the greenroom, the frequenter of the society of *lorettes*, the owner of a neat little one-horse brougham. Watch my man carefully, friend Gazonal, and you shall see a comedy of money. First, the cool, indifferent man that will not give a penny; and second, the hot and eager man smelling a profit. Of all things, listen to him."

With that, the three mounted to a second-floor lodging in a very fine house on the Boulevard des Italiens, and at once found themselves amid elegant surroundings in the height of the fashion. A young man of eight-and-twenty, or thereabouts, came forward almost laughingly at sight of Léon de Lora, held out a hand to all appearance in the friendliest possible way to Bixiou, gave Gazonal a distant bow, and brought the three into his private office. All the man's bourgeois tastes lurked beneath the artistic decorations of the room in spite of the unimpeachable statuettes

and numberless trifles appropriated to the uses of *petits appartements* by modern art, grown petty to supply the demand. Like most young men of business, Vauvinet was extremely carefully dressed, a man's clothes being as it were a kind of prospectus among them.

"I have come to you for money," said Bixiou, laughing as he held out his bills.

Vauvinet's countenance immediately grew so grave that Gazonal was amused at the difference between the smiles of a minute ago and the professional bill-discounting visage he turned on Bixiou.

"I would oblige you with the greatest pleasure, my dear fellow," said he, "but I have no cash at the moment."

"Oh, pshaw!"

"No. I have paid it all away, you know where. Poor old Lousteau is going to run a theater. He has gone into partnership with an ancient playwright that stands very well with the ministry—Ridal, his name is—they wanted thirty thousand francs of me yesterday. I am drained dry, so dry indeed that I am just about to borrow a hundred louis of Cérizet to pay for my losses this morning at lansquenet, at Jenny Cadine's."

"You must be drained dry indeed if you cannot oblige poor Bixiou," put in Léon de Lora, "for he can say very nasty things when he is driven to it——"

"I can only speak well of a man so well off," said Bixiou.

"My dear fellow, even if I had the money, it would be quite impossible to discount bills accepted by your porter, even at fifty per cent. There is no demand for Ravenouillet's paper. He is not exactly Rothschild. I warn you that this sort of thing is played out. You ought to try another firm. Look up an uncle, for the friend that will back your bills is extinct, materialism is so frightfully on the increase——"

Bixiou turned to Gazonal.

"I have a friend here," he said, "one of the best known cloth manufacturers in the South. His name is Gazonal. His hair wants cutting," continued Bixiou, surveying the provincial's luxuriant and somewhat disheveled crop; "but

I am just about to take him to Marius, and his resemblance to a poodle, so deleterious to his credit and ours, will presently disappear."

"A Southern name is not good enough for me, without offense to this gentleman be it said," returned Vauvinet, and Gazonal was so much relieved that he passed over the insolence of the remark. Being extremely acute, he thought that Bixiou and the painter meant to make him pay a thousand francs for the breakfast at the Café de Paris by way of teaching him to know the town. He had not yet got rid of the suspicion in which the provincial always intrenches himself.

"How should I do business in the Pyrenees, six hundred miles away?" added Vauvinet.

"So there is no more to be said?" returned Bixiou.

"I have twenty francs at home."

"I am sorry for you," said the author of the hoax. "I thought I was worth a thousand francs," he added dryly.

'You are worth a hundred thousand francs," Vauvinet rejoined; "sometimes you are even beyond all price—but I am drained dry."

"Oh, well, we will say no more about it. I had contrived as good a bit of business as you could wish at Carabine's to-night—do you know?"

Vauvinet's answer was a wink. So does one dealer in horse-flesh convey to another the information that he is not to be deceived.

"You have forgotten how you took me by the waist, exactly as if I were a pretty woman, and said with coaxing words and looks, 'I will do anything for you, if only you will get me shares at par in this railway that du Tillet and Nucingen are bringing out,' said you. Very well, my dear fellow, Maxime and Nucingen are coming to-night to meet several political folk at Carabine's. You are losing a fine chance, old man. Come. Good-day, dabbler."

And Bixiou rose to go, leaving Vauvinet to all appearance indifferent, but in reality as vexed as a man can be with himself after a blunder of his own making.

"One moment, my dear fellow. I have credit if I have no

cash. If I can get nothing for your bills, I can keep them till they fall due, and give you other bills in exchange from my portfolio. After all, we might possibly come to an understanding about those railway shares; we could divide the profits in a certain proportion, and I would give you a draft on myself on account of the prof——"

"No, no," returned Bixiou, "I must have money; I must cash my Ravenouillet elsewhere——"

"And Ravenouillet is a good man," resumed Vauvinet; "he has an account at the savings bank; a very good man——"

"Better than you are," said Léon; "he has no rent to pay, he does not squander his money on *lorettes*, nor does he rush into speculation and shake in his shoes with every rise and fall."

"You are pleased to laugh, great man. You have given us the quintessence of La Fontaine's fable of the *Oak and the Reed*," said Vauvinet, grown jovial and insinuating all at once.—"Come, Gubetta, my old fellow conspirator," he continued, taking Bixiou by the waist, "you want money, do you? Very well, I may just as well borrow three as two thousand francs of my friend Cérizet. And 'Cinna, let us be friends!' . . . Hand us over those two leaves that grow from the root of all evil. If I refused at first, it was because it is very hard on a man that can only do his bit of business by passing on bills to the Bank to make him keep your Ravenouillets locked up in the drawer of his desk. It is hard; very hard——"

"What discount?"

"Next to nothing," said Vauvinet. "At three months it will cost you a miserable fifty francs."

"You shall be my benefactor, as Émile Blondet used to say."

"It is borrowing money at twenty per cent. per annum, interest included——" Gazonal began in a whisper, but for all answer he received a blow from Bixiou's elbow directed at his windpipe.

"I say," said Vauvinet, opening a drawer, "I perceive an odd note for five hundred francs sticking to the cloth. I

did not know I was so rich. I was looking for a bill to offer you. I have one almost due for four hundred and fifty. Cérizet will take it off you for a trifle; and that makes up the amount. But no tricks, Bixiou. I am going to Carabine's to-night, eh? Will you swear——?"

"Are we not friends again?" asked Bixiou, taking the banknote and the bill. "I give you my word of honor that you shall meet du Tillet to-night and plenty of others that have a mind to make their (rail)way."

Vauvinet came out upon the landing with the three friends, cajoling Bixiou to the last.

Bixiou listened with much seriousness while Gazonal on the way downstairs tried to open his eyes to the nature of the transaction just completed. Gazonal proved to him that if Cérizet, this crony of Vauvinet's, charged no more than twenty francs for discounting a bill for four hundred and fifty francs, then he (Bixiou) was borrowing money at the rate of forty per cent. per annum.

Out upon the pavement Bixiou burst into a laugh, the laugh of a Parisian over a successful hoax, a soundless, joyless chuckle, a labial north-easter which froze Gazonal into silence.

"The grant of the concession to the railway will be postponed at the Chamber," he said; "we knew that yesterday from the *marcheuse* whom we met just now. And if I win five or six thousand francs at lansquenet, what is a loss of sixty or seventy francs so long as you have something to stake?"

"Lansquenet is another of the thousand facets of Paris life to-day," said Léon. "Wherefore, cousin, count upon our introducing you to one of the duchesses of the Rue Saint-Georges. In her house you see the aristocracy of *lorettes*, and may perhaps gain your lawsuit. But you cannot possibly show yourself with that Pyrenean crop, you look like a hedgehog; we will take you to Marius, close by in the Place de la Bourse. He is another of our mummers."

"What is the new mummer?"

"Here comes the anecdote," said Bixiou. "In 1800 a young wigmaker named Cabot came from Toulouse, and set

up show (to use your jargon) in Paris. This genius—he retired afterward with an income of twenty thousand francs to Libourne—this genius, consumed with ambition, saw that the name of Cabot could never be famous. M. Parny, whom be attended professionally, called him Marius, a name infinitely superior to the 'Armands' and 'Hippolytes' beneath which other victims of that hereditary complaint endeavor to conceal the patronymic. All Cabot's successors have been named Marius. The present Marius is Marius V.; his family name is Mougin. This is the way with many trades, with *Eau de Botot* for example, and La Petite-Vertu's ink. In Paris a man's name becomes a part of the business, and at length confers a certain status; the signboard ennobles. Marius left pupils behind him, too, and created (it is said) the first school of hair-dressing in the world."

"I noticed before this as I traveled across France a great many names upon signboards—So-and-so, *from Marius.*"

"All his pupils are bound to wash their hands after each customer," continued Bixiou; "and Marius will not take everyone, a pupil must have a shapely hand and tolerable good looks. The most remarkable of these, for figure or eloquence, are sent out to people's houses; Marius only puts himself about for titled ladies. He has a cab and a 'groom.'"

"But, after all, he is only a barber (*merlan*)," Gazonal cried indignantly.

"A barber!" repeated Bixiou. "You must know that he is a captain in the National Guard, and wears the Cross because he was the first to leap a barricade in 1832."

"Be careful. He is neither a hairdresser nor a wigmaker; he is the manager of *salons de coiffure*," said Léon on the sumptuously carpeted staircase between the mahogany hand-rails and cut-glass balusters.

"And, look here, do not disgrace us," added Bixiou. "The lackeys in the antechamber will take off your coat and hat to brush them, open the door of the salon and close it after you. Which is worth knowing, my friend Gazonal," Bixiou continued slyly, "or you might cry 'Thieves!'"

"The three salons are three boudoirs," said Léon; "the

manager has filled them with all that modern luxury can devise. There are fringed lambrequins over the windows, flower-stands everywhere, and silken couches, on which you await your turn and read the newspapers if all the dressing-rooms are occupied. As you come in, you begin to finger your waistcoat pockets, and imagine that they will charge you five francs at least; but no pocket is mulcted of more than half a franc if the hair is curled, or a franc if the hair-dresser cuts it. Elegant toilet-tables stand among the flowers, there are jets of water playing, you see yourself reflected everywhere in huge mirrors. So try to look as if you were used to it. When the client comes in (Marius uses the elegant term 'client' instead of the common word 'customer'), when the client appears on the threshold, Marius appraises him at a glance; for him you are 'a head' more or less worthy of his interest. From Marius's point of view, there are no men—only heads."

"We will tune Marius to concert-pitch for you," said Bixiou, "if you will follow our lead."

When Gazonal appeared upon the scenes, Marius at once gave him an approving glance. "Regulus!" cried he, "take this head. Clip with the small shears first of all."

At a sign from Bixiou, Gazonal turned to the pupil. "Pardon me," he said, "I wish to have M. Marius himself."

Greatly flattered by this speech, Marius came forward, leaving the head on which he was engaged.

"I am at your service, I am just at an end. Be quite easy, my pupil will prepare you, I myself will decide on the style."

Marius, a little man, his face seamed with the smallpox, his hair frizzed after Rubini's fashion, was dressed in black from head to foot. He wore white cuffs and a diamond in his shirt-frill. He recognized Bixiou, and saluted him as an equal power.

"A commonplace head," he remarked to Léon, indicating the subject under his fingers, "a philistine. But what can one do? If one lived by art alone, one would end raving mad at Bicêtre." And he returned to his client with an inimitable gesture and a parting injunction to Regulus, "Be careful with that gentleman, he is evidently an artist."

"A journalist," said Bixiou.

At that word Marius passed the comb two or three times over the "commonplace head," swooped down upon Gazonal just as the small shears were brought into play, and caught Regulus by the arm with—

"I will take this gentleman.—Look, see yourself in the large mirror, sir (if the glass can stand it)," he said, addressing the relinquished philistine.—"Ossian!"

A lackey came in and carried off the "client."

"Pay at the desk, sir," said Marius as the bewildered customer drew out his purse.

"Is it any use, my dear fellow, to proceed to this operation with the small shears?" asked Bixiou.

"A head never comes under my hands until it has been brushed," said the great man; "but on your account I will take this gentleman from beginning to end. The blocking out I leave to my pupils, I do not care to take it. Everybody, like you, is for 'M. Marius himself'; I can only give the finishing touches. For what paper does monsieur write?"

"In your place I would have three or four editions of Marius."

"Ah! monsieur is a feuilletoniste, I see," said Marius. "Unluckily, a hairdresser must do his work himself, it cannot be done by a deputy. . . . Pardon me."

He left Gazonal to give an eye to Regulus, now engaged with a newly arrived head, and made a disapproving comment thereon, an inarticulate sound produced by tongue and palate, which may be rendered thus—"titt, titt, titt."

"Goodness gracious! come now, that is not broad enough, your scissors are leaving furrows behind them. . . . Stay a bit; look here, Regulus, you are not clipping poodles, but *men*—men with characters of their own; and if you continue to gaze at the ceiling instead of dividing your attention between the glass and the face, you will be a disgrace to 'my house.'"

"You are severe, M. Marius."

"I must do my duty by them, and teach them the mysteries of the art——"

"Then it is an art, is it?"

Marius stopped in indignation, the scissors in one hand, the comb in the other, and contemplated Gazonal in the glass.

"Monsieur, you talk like a —— child. And yet, from your accent, you seem to come from the South, the land of men of genius."

"Yes. It requires taste of a kind, I know," returned Gazonal.

"Pray say no more, monsieur! I looked for better things from you. I mean to say that a hairdresser (I do not say a *good* hairdresser, for one is either a hairdresser or one is not), a hairdresser is not so easily found as—what shall I say?—as—I really hardly know—as a Minister—(sit still) no, that will not do, for you cannot judge of the value of a Minister, the streets are full of them.—A Paganini?—no, that will not quite do.—A hairdresser, monsieur, a man that can read your character and your habits, must have that in him which makes a philosopher. And for the women! But there, women appreciate us, they know our value; they know that their triumphs are due to us when they come to us to prepare them for conquest . . . which is to say that a hairdresser is—but no one knows what he is. I myself, for instance, you will scarcely find a—well, without boasting, people know what I am. Ah! well, no, I think there should be a better yet. . . . Execution, that is the thing! Ah, if women would but give me a free hand; if I could but carry out all the ideas that occur to me!—for I have a tremendous imagination, you see—but women will not coöperate with you, they have notions of their own, they *will* run their fingers or their combs through the exquisite creations that ought to be engraved and recorded, for our works only live for a few hours, you see, sir! Ah! a great hairdresser should be something like what Carême and Vestris are in their lines.—(Your head this way, if you please, I am catching the expression. That will do.)—Bunglers, incapable of understanding their epoch or their art, are the ruin of our profession.—They deal in wigs, for instance, or hair-restorers, and think of nothing but selling you a bottle of stuff, making a trade of the profession; it makes one sorry to see it. The wretches

cut your hair and brush it anyhow. Now, when I came here from Toulouse, it was my ambition to succeed to the great Marius, to be a true Marius, and in my person to add such luster to the name as it had not known with the other four. 'Victory or death!' said I to myself. (Sit up, I have nearly finished.) I was the first to aim at elegance. My salons excited curiosity. I scorn advertisements; I spend the cost of advertisements on comfort, monsieur, on improvements. Next year I shall have a quartette in a little salon; I shall have music, and the best music. Yes, one must beguile the tedium of the time spent in the dressing-room. I do not shut my eyes to the unpleasant aspects of the operation. (Look at yourself.) A visit to the hairdresser is perhaps quite as tiring as sitting for a portrait. Monsieur knows the famous M. de Humboldt? (I managed to make the most of the little hair that America spared to him, for science has this much in common with the savage—she is sure to scalp her man.) Well, the great man said, as monsieur perhaps knows, that if it was painful to go to be hanged, it was only less painful to sit for your portrait. I myself am of the opinion of a good many women, that a visit to the hairdresser is more trying than a visit to the studio. Well, monsieur, I want people to come here for pleasure. (You have a rebellious tuft of hair.) A Jew suggested Italian opera-singers to pluck out the gray hairs of young fellows of forty in the intervals; but his signoras turned out to be young persons from the Conservatoire, or pianoforte teachers from the Rue Montmartre. —Now, monsieur, your hair is worthy of a man of talent.—Ossian!" (to the lackey in livery) "brush this gentleman's coat, and go to the door with him.—Who comes next?" he added majestically, glancing round a group of customers waiting for their turn.

"Do not laugh, Gazonal," said Léon, as they reached the foot of the stairs. "I can see one of our great men down yonder," he continued, exploring the Place de la Bourse with his eyes. "You shall have an opportunity of making a comparison; when you have heard him talk, you shall tell me which is the queerer of the two—he or the hairdresser."

"'Do not laugh, Gazonal,'" added Bixiou, imitating Léon's manner. "What is Marius's business, do you think?"

"He is a hairdresser."

"He has gradually made a monopoly of the wholesale trade in human hair, just as the provision dealer of whom we shall shortly buy a Strasbourg pie for three francs has the truffle trade entirely in his hands. He discounts bills in his line of business, he lends money to customers at a pinch, he deals in annuities, he speculates on 'Change, he is a shareholder in all the fashion papers; and finally, under the name of a chemist, he sells an abominable drug which brings him in thirty thousand francs per annum as his share of the profits, and costs a hundred thousand francs in advertisements."

"Is it possible?"

"Bear this in mind," Bixiou replied with gravity, "in Paris there is no such thing as a small trade; everything here is done on a large scale, be it frippery or matches. The barkeeper standing with a napkin under his arm to watch you enter his shop very likely has an income of fifty thousand francs from investments in the Funds. The waiter has a vote, and may offer himself for election; a man whom you might take for a beggar in the street carries a hundred thousand francs' worth of unmounted diamonds in his waistcoat pocket, and does not steal them."

The three, inseparable for that day at least, were piloted by Léon de Lora in such sort that at the corner of the Rue Vivienne they ran against a man of forty or thereabouts with a ribbon in his buttonhole.

"My dear Dubourdieu, what are you dreaming about? Some beautiful allegorical composition?" asked Léon.—"My dear cousin, I have the pleasure of introducing you to the well-known painter Dubourdieu, celebrated no less for his genius than for his humanitarian convictions.—Dubourdieu, my cousin Palafox!"

Dubourdieu, a pallid little man with melancholy blue eyes, nodded slightly while Gazonal bowed low to the man of genius.

"So you have nominated Stidmann instead of——"

"How could I help it! I was away," returned Léon de Lora.

"You are lowering the standard of the Académie," resumed the painter. "To think of choosing such a man as that! I do not wish to say any harm of him, but he really is a craftsman. . . . What is to become of the first and most permanent of all the arts, of sculpture that reveals the life of a nation when everything else, even the memory of its existence, has passed away—of sculpture that sets the seal of eternity upon the great man? The sculptor's office is sacred. He sums up the thought of his age, and you, forsooth, fill the ranks of the priesthood by taking in a bungling mantelpiece maker, a designer of drawing-room ornaments, one of those that buy and sell in the Temple! Ah! as Chamfort said, 'If you are to endure life in Paris, you must begin by swallowing a viper every morning. . . .' After all, Art remains to us; no one can prevent us from cultivating Art."

"And besides, my dear fellow, you have a consolation which few among artists possess—the future is yours," put in Bixiou. "When everyone is converted to our doctrine, you will be the foremost man in your art, for the ideas which you put into your work will be comprehensible to all—when they are common property. In fifty years' time you will be for the world at large what you are now for us—a great man. It is only a question of holding out till then."

The artist's face smoothed itself out, after the wont of mortal man when flattered on his weak side. "I have just finished an allegorical figure of Harmony," he said. "If you care to come to see it, you will understand at once how I managed to put two years' work into it. It is all there. At a glance you see the Destiny of the Globe. She is a queen holding a bishop's crozier, the symbol of the aggrandizement of races useful to man; on her head she wears the cap of Liberty, and after the Egyptian fashion (the ancient Egyptians seem to have had foreshadowings of Fourier) she has six breasts. Her feet rest upon two clasped hands, which inclose the globe between them, to signify the brotherhood of man; beneath her lie broken fragments of cannon, because all war is abolished, and I have tried to give her the serenity

of Agriculture triumphant. At her feet, besides, I have put an enormous Savoy cabbage, the Master's symbol of Concord. Oh, it is not Fourier's least claim to our veneration that he revived the association of plants and ideas; every detail in creation is linked to the rest by its significance as a part of a whole, and no less by its special language. In a hundred years' time the globe will be much larger than it is now——"

"And how will that come to pass?" inquired Gazonal, amazed to hear a man outside a lunatic asylum talking in this way.

"By the increase of production. If people make up their minds to apply the System, it should react upon the stars; it is not impossible——"

"And in that case what will become of painting?" asked Gazonal.

"Painting will be greater than ever."

"And will our eyes be larger?" continued Gazonal, looking significantly at his friends.

"Man will be once more as in the days before his degradation; our six-foot men will be dwarfs when that time comes——"

"How about your picture," interrupted Léon; "is it finished?"

"Quite finished," said Dubourdieu. "I tried to see Hiclar about a symphony. I should like those who see the picture to hear music in Beethoven's manner at the same time; the music would develop the ideas, which would thus reach the intelligence through the avenues of sight and sound. Ah! if the Government would only lend me one of the halls in the Louvre——"

"But I will mention it if you like. Nothing that can strike people's minds should be left undone."

"Oh! my friends are preparing articles, but I am afraid that they may go too far."

"Pshaw!" said Bixiou, "they will go nothing like as far as the Future——"

Dubourdieu eyed Bixiou askance and went on his way.

"Why, the man is a lunatic," said Gazonal, "moonstruck and mad."

"He has technical skill and knowledge," said Léon, "but Fourier has been the ruin of him. You have just seen one way in which ambition affects an artist. Too often here in Paris, in his desire to reach fame (which for an artist means fortune) by some short cut, he will borrow wings of circumstance; he will think to increase his stature by identifying himself with some Cause, or advocating some system, hoping in time to widen his coterie into a public. Such an one sets up to be a Republican, such another a Saint-Simonian, an aristocrat or a Catholic, or he is for the *juste milieu*, or the Middle Ages, or for Germany. But while opinions cannot give talent, they inevitably spoil it; witness this unfortunate being whom you have just seen. An artist's opinion ought to be a faith in works; and his one way to success is to work while nature gives him the sacred fire."

"Let us fly, Léon is moralizing," said Bixiou.

"And did the man seriously mean what he said?" cried Gazonal; he had not yet recovered from his amazement.

"Very seriously," replied Bixiou; "he was quite as much in earnest as the king of hairdressers just now."

"He is crazy," said Gazonal.

"He is not the only man driven crazy by Fourier's notions," returned Bixiou. "You know nothing of Paris. Ask for a hundred thousand francs to carry out some idea most likely to be useful to the species (to try a steam-engine, for instance), you will die like Salomon de Caus at Bicêtre; but when it comes to a paradox, anyone will be cut in pieces for it —he and his fortune. Well, here it is with systems as with practical matters. Impossible newspapers have consumed millions of francs in the last fifteen years. The very fact that you are in the right of it makes your lawsuit so difficult to win; taken together with the other fact that your prefect has his own private ends to gain, as you say."

"Can you understand how a clever man can live anywhere but in Paris when once he knows the psychology of the city?" asked Léon.

"Suppose that we take Gazonal to Mother Fontaine," suggested Bixiou, beckoning a hackney cab, "it would be a transition from the severe to the fantastic.—Drive to the

Rue Vieille-du-Temple," he called to the man, and the three drove away in the direction of the Marais.

"What are you taking me to see?"

"Ocular demonstration of Bixiou's remarks," said Léon; "you are to be shown a woman who makes twenty thousand francs per annum by exploiting an idea."

"A fortune-teller," explained Bixiou, construing Gazonal's expression as a question. "Among folk that wish to know the future, Mme. Fontaine is held to be even wiser than the late Mlle. Lenormand."

"She must be very rich!"

"She has fallen a victim to her idea since lotteries came into existence. In Paris, you see, great receipts always mean a large expenditure. Every hard head has a crack in it somewhere, like a safety-valve, as it were, for the steam. Everyone that makes a great deal of money has his weaknesses or his fancies, a provision of nature probably to keep the balance."

"And now that lotteries are abolished?"

"Oh, well, she has a nephew, and is saving for him."

Arrived in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, the three friends entered one of the oldest houses in the street, and discovered a tremulous staircase, with wooden steps laid on a foundation of concrete. Up they went in the perpetual twilight, through the fetid atmosphere peculiar to houses with a passage entry, till they reached the third story, and a door which can only be described by a drawing; any attempt to give an adequate idea of it in words would consume too much midnight oil.

An old crone, so much in keeping with the door that she might have been its living counterpart, admitted the three into a room which did duty as an antechamber, icy cold as a crypt, while the streets outside were sweltering in the heat. Puffs of damp air came up from an inner court, a sort of huge breathing-hole in the building; a box full of sickly-looking plants stood on the window-ledge. A gray daylight filled the room. Everything was glazed over with a greasy fuliginous deposit; the chairs and table, the whole room, in fact, was squalid; the damp oozed up through the brick floor

like water through the sides of a Moorish jar. There was not a single detail which did not harmonize with the hook-nosed, pallid, repulsive old hag in the much-mended rags, who asked them to be seated, and informed them that MADAME never saw more than one person at a time.

Gazonal screwed up his courage and went boldly forwards. The woman whom he confronted looked like one of those whom Death has forgotten, or more probably left as a copy of himself in the land of the living. Two gray eyes, so immovable that it tired you to look at them, glittered in a fleshless countenance on either side of a sunken, snuff-bedabbled nose. A set of knuckle-bones, firmly mounted with sinews almost like bone, made as though they were human hands, thrumming like a piece of machinery thrown out of gear upon a pack of cards. The body, a broomstick decently draped with a gown, enjoyed the advantages of still life to the full; it did not move a hair's-breadth. A black velvet cap rose above the automaton's forehead. Mme. Fontaine, for she was really a woman, sat with a black fowl on her right hand, and a fat toad named Ashtaroth on her left. Gazonal did not notice the creature at first.

The toad, an animal of portentous size, was less alarming in himself than by reason of a couple of topazes, each as large as a fifty centime piece, that glowed like lamps in his head. Their gaze was intolerable. "The toad is a mysterious creature," as the late M. Lassailly used to say, after lying out in the fields to have the last word with a toad that fascinated him. Perhaps, all creation, man included, is summed up in the toad; for Lassailly tells us that it lives on almost indefinitely, and it is well known that, of all animals, its mating lasts the longest.

The black fowl's cage stood two feet away from a table covered with a green cloth; a plank like a drawbridge lay between.

When the woman, the least real of the strange company about the table worthy of Hoffman, bade Gazonal "Cut!"—the honest manufacturer shuddered in spite of himself. The secret of the formidable power of such creatures lies in the importance of the thing we seek to learn of them.

Men and women come to buy hope of them; and they know it.

The sibyl's cave was a good deal darker than the antechamber, so much so, in fact, that you could not distinguish the color of the wall-paper. The smoke-begrimed ceiling, so far from reflecting, seemed rather to absorb such feeble light as struggled in through a window blocked up with bleached sickly-looking plant-life; but all the dim daylight in the place fell full upon the table at which the sorceress sat. Her armchair and a chair for Gazonal completed the furniture of a little room cut in two by a garret, where Mme. Fontaine evidently slept. A little door stood ajar, and the murmur of a pot boiling on the fire reached Gazonal's ears. The sounds from the kitchen, the compound of odors in which effluvia from the sink predominated, called up an incongruous association of ideas—the necessities of everyday life and the sense of the supernatural. Disgust was mingled with curiosity. Gazonal caught sight of the lowest step of the deal staircase which led to the garret; he saw all these particulars at a glance, and his gorge rose. The kind of terror inspired by similar scenes in romances and German plays was somehow so different; the absence of illusion, the prosaic sensation caught him by the throat. He felt heavy and dizzy in that atmosphere; the gloom set his nerves on edge. With the very coxcombry of courage, he turned his eyes on the toad, and with sickening sensation of heat in the pit of the stomach, felt a sort of panic such as a criminal might feel at sight of a policeman. Then he sought comfort in a scrutiny of Mme. Fontaine, and found a pair of colorless, almost white eyes, with intolerable unwavering black pupils. The silence grew positively appalling.

"What does monsieur wish?" asked Mme. Fontaine. "His fortune for five francs, or ten francs, or the *grand jeu?*"

"Five francs is quite dear enough," said the Provençal, making unspeakable efforts to fight against the influences of the place. But just as he strove for self-possession, a diabolical cackle made him start on his chair. The black hen emitted a sound.

"Go away, my girl. Monsieur only wishes to spend five francs."

The hen seemed to understand, for when she stood within a step of the cards, she turned and walked solemnly back to her place.

"Which is your favorite flower?" asked the old crone, in a voice hoarse with the accumulation of phlegm in her throat.

"The rose."

"Your favorite color?"

"Blue."

"What animal do you like best?"

"The horse. Why do you ask?" queried Gazonal in turn.

"Man is linked to other forms of life by his own previous existences," she said sententiously, "hence his instincts, and his instincts control his destiny.—Which kind of food do you like best; fish, game, grain, butcher meat, sweet things, fruit, or vegetables?"

"Game."

"In what month were you born?"

"September."

"Hold out your hand."

Mme. Fontaine scanned the palm put forth for her inspection with close attention. All this was done in a business-like way, with no attempt to give a supernatural color to the proceedings; a notary asking a client's wishes with regard to the drafting of a lease could not have been more straightforward. The cards being sufficiently shuffled, she asked Gazonal to cut and make them up into three packs. This done, she took up the packs, spread them out one above another, and eyed them as a gambler eyes the thirty-six numbers at roulette before he stakes his money.

Gazonal felt a cold chill freeze the marrow of his bones; he scarcely knew where he was; but his surprise grew more and more when this repulsive hag in the greasy, flabby green skull-cap, and false front that exhibited more black silk than hair curled into points of interrogation, began to tell him, in

her rheumy voice, of all the events, even the most intimate history of his past life. She told him his tastes, his habits, his character, his ideas even as a child; she knew all that might have influenced his life. There was his projected marriage, for instance; she told him why and by whom it was broken off, giving him an exact description of the woman he had loved; and finally she named his district, and told him about his lawsuit, and so on, and so on.

Gazonal thought at first that the whole thing was a hoax got up for his benefit by his cousin; but the absurdity of this theory struck him almost at once, and he sat in gaping astonishment. Opposite sat the infernal power incarnate, a power that, from among all human shapes, had borrowed that one which has struck the imagination of poets and painters throughout all time as the most appalling—a cold-blooded, shrunken, asthmatic, toothless hag, with hard lips, flat nose, and pale eyes. Nothing was alive about Mme. Fontaine's face save the eyes; some gleam from the depths of the future or the fires of hell sparkled in them.

Gazonal, scarcely knowing what he said, interrupted her to ask the uses of the fowl and the toad.

"To foretell the future. The 'consultant' himself scatters some seeds over the cards; Cleopatra comes to pick them up; and Ashtaroth creeps over them to seek the food that the client gives him. Their wonderful intelligence is never deceived. Would you like to see them at work and hear your future read? It costs a hundred francs."

But Gazonal, dismayed by Ashtaroth's expression, bade the terrible Mme. Fontaine good-day, and fled into the next room. He was damp with perspiration; he seemed to feel an unclean spirit brooding over him.

"Let us go out of this," he said. "Has either of you ever consulted this witch?"

"I never think of taking a step in life until Ashtaroth has given his opinion," said Léon, "and I am always the better for it."

"I am still expecting the honest competence promised me by Cleopatra," added Bixiou.

"I am in a fever!" cried the child of the South. "If I

believed all that you tell me, I should believe in witchcraft, in a supernatural power."

"It can only be natural," put in Bixiou. "Half the artists alive, one-third of the *lorettes*, and one-fourth of the statesmen consult Mme. Fontaine. It is well known that she acts as Egeria to a certain statesman."

"Did she tell you your fortune?" inquired Léon.

"No. I had quite enough of it with the past." A sudden idea struck Gazonal. "But if she and her disgusting collaborators can foretell the future," he said, "how is it that she is unlucky in the lottery?"

"Ah! there you have set your finger on one of the great mysteries of occult science," answered Léon. "So soon as the personal element dims the surface of that inward mirror, as it were, which reflects past and future, so soon as you introduce any motive foreign to the exercise of this power that they possess, the sorcerer or sorceress at once loses the power of vision. It is the same with the artist who systematically prostitutes art to gain advancement or alien ends; he loses his gift. Mme. Fontaine once had a rival, a man who told fortunes on the cards; he fell into criminal courses, yet he never foresaw his own arrest, conviction, and sentence. Mme. Fontaine is right eight times out of ten, yet she never could tell that she should lose her stake in the lottery."

"It is the same with magnetism," Bixiou remarked. "A man cannot magnetize himself."

"Good! Now comes magnetism. What next! Do you really know everything?"

"My friend Gazonal, before you can laugh at everything, you must know everything," said Bixiou with gravity. "For my own part, I have known Paris since I was a boy, and my pencil helps me to laugh for a livelihood at the rate of five caricatures per month. So I very often laugh at an idea in which I have faith."

"Now, let us go in for something else," said Léon. "Let us drive to the Chamber and arrange the cousin's business."

"This," continued Bixiou, burlesquing Odry and Gaillard, "is High Comedy; we will draw out the first great speaker

that we meet in the Salle des Pas Perdus; and there, as everywhere else, you shall hear the Parisian harping upon two eternal strings—Self-interest and Vanity.

As they stepped into the cab again, Léon noticed a man driving rapidly past, and signaled his wish to speak a word with the newcomer.

"It is Publicola Masson," he told Bixiou; "I will just ask him for an interview this evening at five o'clock when the House rises. The cousin shall see the queerest of all characters."

"Who is it?" asked Gazonal, while Léon went across to speak to his man.

"A chiropodist, that will cut your corns by contract, an author of a treatise on chiropody. If the Republicans triumph for six months, he will without doubt have a place in history."

"And does he keep a carriage?"

"No one but a millionaire can afford to go about on foot here, my friend."

"The Chamber!" Léon called to the driver.

"Which, sir?"

"The Chamber of Deputies," said Léon, exchanging a smile with Bixiou.

"Paris is beginning to confuse me," sighed Gazonal.

"To show you its immensity—moral, political, and literary—we are copying the Roman cicerone that shows you a thumb of the statue of St. Peter, which you take for a life-size figure until you find out that a finger is more than a foot long. You have not so much as measured one of the toes of Paris yet——"

"And observe, Cousin Gazonal, that we are taking things as they come, we are not selecting."

"You shall have a Belshazzar's feast to-night; you shall see Paris, *our* Paris, playing at lansquenet, staking a hundred thousand francs without winking an eye."

Fifteen minutes later their hackney cab set them down by the flight of steps before the Chamber of Deputies on that side of the Pont de la Concorde which leads to discord.

"I thought the Chambers were unapproachable," said

Gazonal, surprised to find himself in the great Salle des Pas Perdus.

"That depends," said Bixiou. "Physically speaking, it costs you thirty sous in cab hire; politically speaking, rather more. A poet says that the swallows think that the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile was built for them; and we artists believe that this public monument was built to console the failures on the stage of the Théâtre-Français and to amuse us; but these state-paid play-actors are more expensive than the others, and it is not every day that we get our money's worth."

"So this is the Chamber! . . ." repeated Gazonal. He strode through the great hall, almost empty now, looking about him with an expression which Bixiou noted down in his memory for one of the famous caricatures in which he rivals Gavarni. Léon on his side walked up to one of the ushers who come and go constantly between the Salle des Séances itself and the lobby, where the reporters of the *Moniteur* are at work while the House is sitting, with some persons attached to the Chamber.

"The Minister is here," the usher was telling Léon as Gazanol came up, "but I do not know whether M. Giraud has gone or not; I will see——" He opened one of the folding doors through which no one is allowed to pass save deputies, ministers, or royal commissioners, when a man came out, young as yet, as it seemed to Gazonal, in spite of his forty-eight years. To this newcomer the usher pointed out Léon de Lora.

"Aha! you here!" he said, shaking hands with Léon and Bixiou. "You rascals! what do you want in the innermost sanctuary of law?"

"Gad! we have come for a lesson in the art of humbug," said Bixiou. "One gets rusty if one does not."

"Then let us go out into the garden," said the newcomer, not knowing that Gazonal was one of the company.

Gazonal was at a loss how to classify the well-dressed stranger in plain black from head to foot, with a ribbon and an order; but he followed to the terrace by the river once known as the Quai Napoléon. Out in the garden the *ci-*

devant young man gave vent to a laugh, suppressed since his appearance in the Salle des Pas Perdus.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" asked Léon.

"My dear friend, we are driven to tell terrific lies with incredible coolness to prove the sincerity of the constitutional government. Now I myself have my moods. There are days when I can lie like a political programme, and others when I cannot keep my countenance. This is one of my hilarious days. Now the Opposition has called upon the chief secretary to disclose secrets of diplomacy which he would not impart if they were in office, and at this moment he is on his legs preparing to go through a gymnastic performance. And as he is an honest man that will not lie on his own account, he said confidentially to me before he mounted to the breach, 'I have not a notion what to tell them.' So, when I saw him there, an uncontrollable desire to laugh seized me, and I went out, for you cannot very well have your laugh out on the Ministerial benches, where my youth occasionally revisits me unseasonably."

"At last!" cried Gazonal. "At last! I have found an honest man in Paris. You must be indeed great!" he continued, looking at the stranger.

"I say, who is this gentleman?" inquired the other, scrutinizing Gazonal as he spoke.

"A cousin of mine," Léon put in hastily. "I can answer for his silence and loyalty as for my own. We have come here on his account; he has a lawsuit on hand, it depends on your department; his prefect simply wishes to ruin him, and we have come to see you about it and to prevent the Council of State from confirming injustice."

"Who is the chairman?"

"Massol."

"Good."

"And our friends Claude Vignon and Giraud are on the committee," added Bixiou.

"Just say a word to them, and let them come to Carabine's to-night," said Léon. "Du Tillet is giving a party, ostensibly a meeting of railway shareholders, for they rob you more than ever on the highways now."

"But, I say, is this in the Pyrénées?" inquired the young-looking stranger, grown serious by this time.

"Yes," said Gazonal.

"And you do not vote for us at the general election," he continued, fixing his eyes on Gazonal.

"No; but the remarks you made just now have corrupted me. On the honor of a Commandant of the National Guard, I will see that your candidate is returned——"

"Very well. Can you further guarantee your cousin?" asked the young-looking man, addressing Léon.

"We are forming him," said Bixiou, in a very comical tone.

"Well, I shall see," said the other, and he hurried back to the Salle des Séances.

"I say, who is that?"

"The Comte de Rastignac; he is the head of the department in which your affair is going on."

"A Minister! Is that all?"

"He is an old friend of ours as well, and he has three hundred thousand livres a year, and he is a peer of France, and the King has given him the title of Count. He is Nucingen's son-in-law, and one of the two or three statesmen produced by the Revolution of July. Now and then, however, he finds office dull, and comes out to have a laugh with us."

"But, look here, cousin, you did not tell us that you were on the other side down yonder," said Léon, taking Gazonal by the arm. "How stupid you are! One deputy more or less to the Right or Left, will you sleep any the softer for that?"

"We are on the side of the others——"

"Let them be," said Bixiou—Monrose himself could not have spoken the words more comically—"let them be, they have Providence on their side, and Providence will look after them without your assistance and in spite of themselves.—A manufacturer is bound to be a necessarian."

"Good! here comes Maxime with Canalis and Giraud," cried Léon.

"Come, friend Gazonal; the promised actors are arriving on the scene."

The three went towards the newcomers, who to all appearance were lounging on the terrace.

"Have they sent you about your business that you are doing like this?" inquired Bixiou, addressing Giraud.

"No. We have come out for a breath of air till the ballot is over."

"And how did the chief secretary get out of it?"

"He was magnificent!" said Canalis.

"Magnificent!" from Giraud.

"Magnificent!" from Maxime.

"I say! Right, Left, and Center all of one mind!"

"Each of us has a different idea in his head though," Maxime de Trailles remarked. (Maxime was a Ministerialist.)

"Yes," laughed Canalis. Canalis had once been in office, but he was now edging away towards the Right.

"You have just enjoyed a great triumph," Maxime said, addressing Canalis, "for you drove the Minister to reply."

"Yes, and to lie like a charlatan," returned Canalis.

"A glorious victory!" commented honest Giraud. "What would you have done in his place?"

"I should have lied likewise."

"Nobody calls it 'lying,'" said Maxime; "it is called 'covering the Crown,'" and he drew Canalis a few paces aside.

Léon turned to Giraud.

"Canalis is a very good speaker," he said.

"Yes and no," returned the State Councilor. "He is an empty drum, an artist in words rather than a speaker. In short, 'tis a fine instrument, but it is not music, and therefore he has not had and never will have 'the ear of the House.' He thinks that France cannot do without him; but whatever happens, he cannot possibly be 'the man of the situation.'"

Canalis and Maxime rejoined the group just as Giraud, deputy of the Center-Left, delivered himself of this verdict. Maxime took Giraud by the arm and drew him away, probably to give the same confidences that Canalis had received.

"What an honest, worthy fellow he is!" said Léon, indicating Giraud.

"That kind of honesty is the ruin of a government," replied Canalis.

"Is he a good speaker in your opinion?"

"Yes and no," said Canalis. "He is wordy and prosy. He is a plodding reasoner, a good logician; but he does not comprehend the wider logic—the logic of events and of affairs—for which reason he has not and never will have 'the ear of the House'——"

Canalis was in the midst of his summing-up when the subject of his remarks came towards them with Maxime; and, forgetting that there was a stranger present whose discretion was not so certain as Léon's or Bixiou's, he took Canalis's hand significantly.

"Very good," said he, "I agree to M. le Comte de Trailles's proposals. I will ask the question, but it will be pressed hard."

"Then we shall have the House with us on the question, for a man of your capacity and eloquence 'always has the ear of the House,'" returned Canalis. "I will undertake to crush you and no mistake."

"You very likely will bring about a change of ministry, for on such ground you can do anything you like with the House, and you will be 'the man of the situation'——"

"Maxime has hocused them both," said Léon, turning to his cousin. "That fine fellow is as much at home in parliamentary intrigue as a fish in water."

"Who is he?" asked Gazonal.

"He *was* a scamp; he *is* in a fair way to be an ambassador," answered Bixiou.

"Giraud," said Léon, "do not go until you have asked Rastignac to say something, as he promised me he would, about a lawsuit that will come up for decision before you the day after to-morrow; it affects my cousin here. I will come round to-morrow morning to see you about it." And the three friends followed the three politicians, at a certain distance, to the Salle des Pas Perdus.

"Now, cousin, look at the two yonder," said Léon, point-

ing out a retired and very famous Minister and the leader of the Left Center, "those are two speakers that always 'have the ear of the House'; they have been called in joke the leaders of His Majesty's Opposition; they have the ear of the House, so much so indeed that they very often pull it."

"It is four o'clock. Let us go back to the Rue de Berlin," said Bixiou.

"Yes. You have just seen the heart of the Government; now you ought to see the parasites and ascarides, the tapeworm, or, since one must call him by his name—the Republican."

The friends were no sooner packed into their cab than Gazonal looked maliciously at his cousin and Bixiou; there was a pent-up flood of Southern and splenetic oratory within him.

"I had my suspicions before of this great jade of a city," he burst out in his thick Southern accent, "but after this morning I despise it. The poor country district, for so shabby as she is, is an honest girl; but Paris is a prostitute, rapacious, deceitful, artificial, and I am very glad to escape with my skin——"

"The day is not over yet," Bixiou said sententiously, with a wink at Léon.

"And why complain like a fool of a so-called prostitution by which you will gain your case?" added Léon. "Do you think yourself a better man, less hypocritical than we are, less rapacious, less ready to make it a descent of any sort, less taken up with vanity than all those whom we have set dancing like marionettes?"

"Try to tempt me."

"Poor fellow!" shrugged Léon. "Have you not promised your vote and influence, as it is, to Rastignac?"

"Yes; because he is the only one among them that laughed at himself."

"Poor fellow!" echoed Bixiou. "And you distrust *me* when I have done nothing but laugh! You remind me of a cur snapping at a tiger.—Ah, if you had but seen us making game of somebody or other. Do you realize

that we are capable of driving a sane man out of his wits?"

At this point they reached Léon's house. The splendor of its furniture cut Gazonal short and put an end to the dispute. Rather later in the day it began to dawn upon him that Bixiou had been drawing *him* out.

At half-past five, Léon de Lora was dressing for the evening, to Gazonal's great bewilderment. He counted up his cousin's thousand-and-one superfluities, and admired the valet's seriousness, when "monsieur's chiropodist" was announced, and Publicola Masson entered the room, bowed to Gazonal and Bixiou, set down a little case of instruments, and took a low chair opposite Léon. The newcomer, a little man of fifty, bore a certain resemblance to Marat.

"How are things going?" inquired Léon, holding out a foot, previously washed by the servant.

"Well, I am compelled to take a couple of pupils, two young fellows that have given up surgery in despair and taken to chiropody. They were starving, and yet they are not without brains——"

"Oh, I was not speaking of matters pedestrian; I was asking after your political programme——"

Masson's glance at Gazonal was more expressive than any spoken inquiry.

"Oh! speak out; that is my cousin, and he is all but one of you; he fancies that he is a Legitimist."

"Oh well, we are getting on; we are getting on. All Europe will be with us in five years' time. Switzerland and Italy are in full ferment, and we are ready for the opportunity if it comes. Here, for instance, we have fifty thousand armed men, to say nothing of two hundred thousand penniless citizens——"

"Pooh!" said Léon, "how about the fortifications?"

"Piecrusts made to be broken," Masson retorted. "In the first place, we shall never allow artillery to come within range; and in the second, we have a little contrivance more effectual than all the fortifications in the world, an invention which we owe to the doctor who cured folk faster than all the

rest of the faculty could kill them while his machine was in operation."

"What a rate you are going!" said Gazonal. The sight of Publicola made his flesh creep.

"Oh, there is no help for it. We come after Robespierre and Saint-Just, to improve upon them. They were timid, and you see what came of it—an emperor, the elder branch and then the younger. The Mountain did not prune the social tree sufficiently."

"Look here, you that will be consul, or tribune, or something like it, don't forget that I have asked for your protection any time these ten years," said Bixiou.

"Nothing will happen to you. We shall need jesters, and you could take up Barère's job."

"And I?" queried Léon.

"Oh, you are my client; that will save you; for genius is an odious privileged class that receives far too much here in France. We shall be forced to demolish a few of our great men to teach the rest the lesson that they must be simple citizens."

This was said with a mixture of jest and earnest that sent a shudder through Gazonal.

"Then will there be an end of religion?" he asked.

"An end of a *State religion*," said Masson, laying a stress on the two last words; "everyone will have his own belief. It is a very lucky thing that the Government just now is protecting the convents; they are accumulating the wealth for our Government. Everybody is conspiring to help us. For instance, all those who pity the people, and bawl so much over the proletariat and the wage-earning classes, or write against the Jesuits, or interest themselves in the amelioration of anybody whatsoever—communists, humanitarians, philanthropists, you understand,—all these folk are our advanced guard. While we lay in powder they are braiding the fuse, and the spark of circumstance will set fire to it."

"Now, pray, what do you want for the welfare of the country?"

"Equality among the citizens, cheap commodities of every

kind. There shall be no starving folk on one hand, no millionaires on the other; no blood-suckers, no victims—that is what we want."

"Which is to say the *maximum* and the *minimum?*" queried Gazonal.

"You have said," the other returned laconically.

"An end of manufacturers?"

"Manufactures will be carried on for the benefit of the State; we shall all have a life interest in France. Every man will have his rations served out as if he were on board ship, and everybody will do the work for which he is fitted."

"Good. And meanwhile, until you can cut your aristocrats' heads off——"

"I pare their nails," said the Republican-Radical, shutting up his case of instruments and finishing the joke himself. Then with a very polite bow he withdrew.

"Is it possible? In 1845?" cried Gazonal.

"If we had time we could show you all the characters of 1793; and you should talk with them. You have just seen Marat. Well, we know Fouquier-Tinville, Collot-d'Herbois, Robespierre, Chabot, Fouché, Barras, and even a magnificent Mme. Roland."

"Ah well, tragedy has not been left unrepresented on this stage," said Gazonal.

"It is six o'clock. We will take you to see Odry in *Les Saltimbanques* this evening, but first we must call upon Mme. Cadine, an actress, very intimate with Massol your chairman; you must pay your court assiduously to her to-night."

"As it is absolutely necessary that you should conciliate this power, I will just give you a few hints," added Bixiou. "Do you employ women in your factory?"

"Assuredly."

"That was all that I wanted to know," said Bixiou. "You are not a married man, you are a great——"

"Yes," interrupted Gazonal. "You have guessed; women are my weak point."

"Very good. If you decide to execute a little maneuver

which I will teach you, you shall know something of the charm of intimacy with an actress without spending one farthing."

Bixiou, intent on playing a mischievous trick upon the cautious Gazonal, had scarcely finished tracing out his part for him, when they reached Mme. Cadine's house in the Rue de la Victoire. But a hint was enough for the Southern brain, as will shortly be seen.

They climbed the stair of a tolerably fine house, and discovered Jenny Cadine finishing her dinner. She was to play in the second piece at the Gymnase. Gazonal introduced to the power, Léon and Bixiou went aside ostensibly to see a new piece of furniture, really to leave the two alone together; but not before Bixiou had whispered to her that "this was Léon's cousin, a manufacturer worth millions of francs.—He wants to gain his lawsuit against the prefect in the Council of State," he added, "so he wishes to win you first, to have Massol on his side."

All Paris knows Jenny Cadine's great beauty; no one can wonder, therefore, that Gazonal stood dumfounded at sight of her. She had received him almost coldly at first, but during those few minutes that he spent alone with her she was very gracious to him. Gazonal looked contemptuously round at the drawing-room furniture through the door left ajar by his fellow-conspirators, and made a mental estimate of the contents of the dining-room.

"How any man can leave such a woman as you in such a dog-hole as this!——" he began.

"Ah! there it is. It cannot be helped. Massol is not rich. I am waiting until he is a Minister——"

"Happy man!" exclaimed Gazonal, heaving a sigh from the depths of a provincial heart.

"Good," thought the actress, "I shall have new furniture; I can rival Carabine now."

Léon came in. "Well, dear child," he said, "you are coming to Carabine's this evening, are you not? Supper and lansquenet."

"Will monsieur be there?" Jenny asked artlessly and sweetly.

"Yes, madame," said Gazonal, dazzled by his rapid success.

"But Massol will be there, too," rejoined Bixiou.

"Well, and what has that to do with it?" retorted Jenny. "Now let us go, my treasures, I must be off to my theater."

Gazonal handed her down to the cab that was waiting for her at the door, and squeezed her hands so tenderly, that Jenny wrung her fingers.

"Eh!" she cried, "I have not a second set."

Once in the carriage, Gazonal tried to hug Bixiou. "She is hooked!" he cried; "you are a most unmitigated scoundrel!"

"So the women say," returned Bixiou.

At half-past eleven, after the play, a hackney cab brought the trio to Mlle. Séraphine Sinet's abode. Every well-known *lorette* either takes a pseudonym, or somebody bestows one upon her, and Séraphine is better known as Carabine, possible because she never fails to bring down her "pigeon." She had come to be almost indispensable to du Tillet, the famous banker and member of the Left Center, and at that time she was living in charming rooms in the Rue Saint-Georges. There are certain houses in Paris that seem fated to carry on a tradition; this particular house had already seen seven reigns of courtesans. A stockbroker had installed Suzanne de Val-Noble in it somewhere about the year 1827. The notorious Esther had here driven the Baron de Nucingen to commit the only follies of his life. Here Florine, and she whom some facetiously call the "*late* Mme. Schontz," had shone in turn, and finally when du Tillet tired of his wife he had taken the little modern house and established Carabine in it; her lively wit, her offhand manners, her brilliant shamelessness provided him with a counterpoise for the cares of life, domestic, public, and financial.

Ten covers were always laid; dinner was served (and splendidly) whether du Tillet and Carabine were at home or no. Artists, men of letters, journalists, and frequenters of the house dined there, and there was play of an evening.

More than one member of the Chamber came hither to seek the pleasure that is paid for in Paris by its weight in gold. A few feminine eccentrics, certain falling stars of doubtful significance that sparkle in the Parisian firmament, appeared here in all the splendor of their toilettes. The conversation was good, for talk was unrestrained, and anything might be said and was said. Carabine, a rival of the no less celebrated Malaga, had fallen heir as it were to several salons; the coteries belonging to Florine (now Mme. Nathan), Tullia (afterwards Comtesse du Bruel), and Mme. Schontz (who became the wife of President du Ronceret) had all rallied to Carabine.

Gazonal made but one remark as he came in, but his observation was both legitimate and Legitimist—"It is finer than the Tuileries," said he; and, indeed, his provincial eyes found so much employment with satins, velvets, brocades, and gilding, that he did not see Jenny Cadine in a dress that commanded respect, hidden behind Carabine. She was taking mental notes of her litigant's entry while she chatted with her hostess.

"This is my cousin, my dear," said Léon, addressing Carabine; "he is a manufacturer; he dropped in upon me this morning from the Pyrénées. He knows nothing as yet of Paris; he wants Massol's help in a case that has gone up to the Council of State; so we have taken the liberty of bringing him here to supper, beseeching you at the same time to leave him in full possession of his faculties——"

"As he pleases; wine is dear," said Carabine, scanning the provincial, who struck her as in no wise remarkable.

As for Gazonal, dazzled by the women's dresses, the lights, the gilding, and the chatter of various groups, all concerned, as he supposed, with him and his affairs, he could only stammer out incoherent words.

"Madame—madame—you are—you are very kind."

"What do you manufacture?" asked the mistress of the house, smiling at him.

"Say lace," prompted Bixiou in a whisper, "and offer her pillow-lace or guipures."

"P-p-pill——"

"Pills!" said Carabine. "I say, Cadine, child, you have been taken in."

"Lace," Gazonal got out, comprehending that he must pay for his supper. "It will give me the greatest pleasure to offer you—er—a dress—a scarf—a mantilla of my own manufacture."

"What, three things! Well, well, you are nicer than you look," returned Carabine.

"Paris has caught me," said Gazonal to himself, as he caught sight of Jenny Cadine, and went to pay his respects to her.

"And what should *I* have?" asked the actress.

"Why, my whole fortune!" cried Gazonal, shrewdly of the opinion that to offer all was to offer nothing.

Massol, Claude Vignon, du Tillet, Maxime de Trailles, Nucingen, Du Bruel, Malaga, M. and Mme. Gaillard, Vauvinet, and a host of others crowded in.

In the course of conversation, Massol and Gazonal went to the bottom of the dispute; the former, without committing himself, remarked that the report was not yet drawn up, and that citizens might put confidence in the lights and the independent opinion of the Council of State. After this cut-and-dried response Gazonal, losing hope, judged it necessary to win over the charming Jenny Cadine, with whom he fell head over ears in love. Léon de Lora and Bixiou left their victim in the clutches of the most mischief-loving woman in their singular set, for Jenny Cadine was the famous Déjazet's sole rival.

At the supper-table Gazonal was fascinated by the work of Froment Meurice, the modern Benvenuto Cellini—by costly plate, with contents worth the interest on the wrought silver that held them. The two perpetrators of the hoax had taken care to sit as far away from him as possible; but furtively they watched the wily actress's progress. Ensnared by that insidious hint of new furniture, she had set herself to carry Gazonal home with her; and never did lamb in the Fête-Dieu procession submit to be led by his St. John the Baptist with a better grace than Gazonal showed in his obedience to this siren.

Three days afterwards, Léon and Bixiou, having meanwhile seen and heard nothing of their friend, repaired to his lodging about two o'clock in the afternoon.

"Well, cousin, the decision has been given in your favor."

"Alas! it makes no difference now, cousin," Gazonal answered, turning his melancholy eyes upon them; "I have turned Republican again."

"*Quésaco?*" asked Léon.

"I have nothing left, not even enough to pay my counsel. Mme. Jenny Cadine holds bills of mine for more than I am worth——"

"It is a fact that Cadine is rather expensive, but——"

"Oh! I have had my money's worth. Ah! what a woman! After all, Paris is too much for a provincial. I am about to retire to La Trappe."

"Good," said Bixiou. "Now you talk sensibly. Here, acknowledge the sovereign power of the capital——"

"And of capital!" cried Léon, holding out Gazonal's bills.

Gazonal stared at the papers in bewilderment.

"You cannot say that we have no notion of hospitality; we have educated you, rescued you from want, treated you, and—amused you," said Bixiou.

"And nothing to pay!" added Léon, with a gesture by which a street-boy conveys the idea that somebody has been successfully "done."

PARIS, *November* 1845.

FACINO CANE

FACINO CANE

I ONCE used to live in a little street which probably is not known to you—the Rue de Lesdiguières. It is a turning out of the Rue Saint-Antoine, beginning just opposite a fountain near the Place de la Bastille, and ending in the Rue de la Cerisaie. Love of knowledge stranded me in a garret; my nights I spent in work, my days in reading at the Bibliothèque d'Orléans, close by. I lived frugally, I had accepted the conditions of the monastic life, necessary conditions for every worker, scarcely permitting myself a walk along the Boulevard Bourdon when the weather was fine. One passion only had power to draw me from my studies; and yet, what was that passion but a study of another kind? I used to watch the manners and customs of the Faubourg, its inhabitants, and their characteristics. As I dressed no better than a workingman, and cared nothing for appearances, I did not put them on their guard; I could join a group and look on while they drove bargains or wrangled among themselves on their way home from work. Even then observation had come to be an instinct with me; a faculty of penetrating to the soul without neglecting the body; or rather, a power of grasping external details so thoroughly that they never detained me for a moment, and at once I passed beyond and through them. I could enter into the life of the human creatures whom I watched, just as the dervish in the *Arabian Nights* could pass into any soul or body after pronouncing a certain formula.

If I met a workingman and his wife in the streets between eleven o'clock and midnight on their way home from the Ambigu Comique, I used to amuse myself by following them from the Boulevard du Pont aux Choux to the Boulevard Beaumarchais. The good folk would begin by talking about the play; then from one thing to another they would come to their own affairs, and the mother would walk on and on, heedless of complaints or question from the little one that dragged at her hand, while she and her husband reckoned up

the wages to be paid on the morrow, and spent the money in a score of different ways. Then came domestic details, lamentations over the excessive dearness of potatoes, or the length of the winter and the high price of block fuel, together with forcible representations of amounts owing to the baker, ending in an acrimonious dispute, in the course of which such couples reveal their characters in picturesque language. As I listened, I could make their lives mine, I felt their rags on my back, I walked with their gaping shoes on my feet; their cravings, their needs, had all passed into my soul, or my soul had passed into theirs. It was the dream of a waking man. I waxed hot with them over the foreman's tyranny, or the bad customers that made them call again and again for payment.

To come out of my own ways of life, to be another than myself through a kind of intoxication of the intellectual faculties, and to play this game at will, such was my recreation. Whence comes the gift? Is it a kind of second sight? Is it one of those powers which when abused end in madness? I have never tried to discover its source; I possess it, I use it, that is all. But this it behooves you to know, that in those days I began to resolve the heterogeneous mass known as the People into its elements, and to evaluate its good and bad qualities. Even then I realized the possibilities of my suburb, that hotbed of revolution in which heroes, inventors, and practical men of science, rogues and scoundrels, virtues and vices, were all packed together by poverty, stifled by necessity, drowned in drink, and consumed by ardent spirits.

You would not imagine how many adventures, how many tragedies, lie buried away out of sight in that Dolorous City; how much horror and beauty lurks there. No imagination can reach the Truth, no one can go down into that city to make discoveries; for one must needs descend too low into its depths to see the wonderful scenes of tragedy or comedy enacted there, the masterpieces brought forth by chance.

I do not know how it is that I have kept the following story so long untold. It is one of the curious things that

stop in the bag from which Memory draws out stories at haphazard, like numbers in a lottery. There are plenty of tales just as strange and just as well hidden still left; but some day, you may be sure, their turn will come.

One day my charwoman, a workingman's wife, came to beg me to honor her sister's wedding with my presence. If you are to realize what this wedding was like, you must know that I paid my charwoman, poor creature, four francs a month; for which sum she came every morning to make my bed, clean my shoes, brush my clothes, sweep the room, and make ready my breakfast, before going to her day's work of turning the handle of a machine, at which hard drudgery she earned fivepence. Her husband, a cabinetmaker, made four francs a day at his trade; but as they had three children, it was all that they could do to gain an honest living. Yet I have never met with more sterling honesty than in this man and his wife. For five years after I left the quarter, Mère Vaillant used to come on my birthday with a bunch of flowers and some oranges for me—she that had never a sixpence to put by! Want had drawn us together. I never could give her more than a ten-franc piece, and often I had to borrow the money for the occasion. This will perhaps explain my promise to go to the wedding; I hoped to efface myself in these poor people's merry-making.

The banquet and the ball were given on a first floor above a wineshop in the Rue de Charenton. It was a large room, lighted by oil lamps with tin reflectors. A row of wooden benches ran round the walls, which were black with grime to the height of the tables. Here some eighty persons, all in their Sunday best, tricked out with ribbons and bunches of flowers, all of them on pleasure bent, were dancing away with heated visages as if the world were about to come to an end. Bride and bridegroom exchanged salutes to the general satisfaction, amid a chorus of facetious "Oh, ohs!" and "Ah, ahs!" less really indecent than the furtive glances of young girls that have been well brought up. There was something indescribably infectious about the rough, homely enjoyment in all countenances.

But neither the faces, nor the wedding, nor the wedding-guests have anything to do with my story. Simply bear them in mind as the odd setting to it. Try to realize the scene: the shabby, red-painted wineshop, the smell of wine, the yells of merriment; try to feel that you are really in the faubourg, among old people, workingmen and poor women giving themselves up to a night's enjoyment.

The band consisted of a fiddle, a clarionet, and a flageolet from the Blind Asylum. The three were paid seven francs in a lump sum for the night. For the money, they gave us, not Beethoven certainly, nor yet Rossini; they played as they had the will and the skill; and everyone in the room (with charming delicacy of feeling) refrained from finding fault. The music made such a brutal assault on the drum of my ear, that after a first glance round the room my eyes fell at once upon the blind trio, and the sight of their uniform inclined me from the first to indulgence. As the artists stood in a window recess, it was difficult to distinguish their faces except at close quarters, and I kept away at first; but when I came nearer (I hardly know why) I thought of nothing else; the wedding party and the music ceased to exist, my curiosity was roused to the highest pitch, for my soul passed into the body of the clarionet player.

The fiddle and the flageolet were neither of them interesting; their faces were of the ordinary type among the blind—earnest, attentive, and grave. Not so the clarionet player; any artist or philosopher must have come to a stop at the sight of him.

Picture to yourself a plaster mask of Dante in the red lamplight, with a forest of silver-white hair above the brows. Blindness intensified the expression of bitterness and sorrow in that grand face of his; the dead eyes were lighted up, as it were, by a thought within that broke forth like a burning flame, lit by one sole insatiable desire, written large in vigorous characters upon an arching brow scored across with as many lines as an old stone wall.

The old man was playing at random, without the slightest regard for time or tune. His fingers traveled mechanically over the worn keys of his instrument; he did

not trouble himself over a false note now and again (a *canard*, in the language of the orchestra), neither did the dancers, nor, for that matter, did my old Italian's acolytes; for I had made up my mind that he must be an Italian, and an Italian he was. There was something great, something too of the despot about this old Homer bearing within him an *Odyssey* doomed to oblivion. The greatness was so real that it triumphed over his abject position; the despotism so much a part of him, that it rose above his poverty.

There are violent passions which drive a man to good or evil, making of him a hero or a convict; of these there was not one that had failed to leave its traces on the grandly hewn, lividly Italian face. You trembled lest a flash of thought should suddenly light up the deep, sightless hollows under the grizzled brows, as you might fear to see brigands with torches and poniards in the mouth of a cavern. You felt that there was a lion in that cage of flesh, a lion spent with useless raging against iron bars. The fires of despair had burned themselves out into ashes, the lava had cooled; but the tracks of the flames, the wreckage, and a little smoke remained to bear witness to the violence of the eruption, the ravages of the fire. These images crowded up at the sight of the clarionet player, till the thoughts now grown cold in his face burned hot within my soul.

The fiddle and the flageolet took a deep interest in bottles and glasses; at the end of a country-dance, they hung their instruments from a button on their reddish-colored coats, and stretched out their hands to a little table set in the window recess to hold their liquor supply. Each time they did so they held out a full glass to the Italian, who could not reach it for himself because he sat in front of the table, and each time the Italian thanked them with a friendly nod. All their movements were made with the precision which always amazes you so much at the Blind Asylum. You could almost think that they can see. I came nearer to listen; but when I stood beside them, they evidently guessed I was not a workingman, and kept themselves to themselves.

"What part of the world do you come from, you that are playing the clarionet?"

"From Venice," he said, with a trace of Italian accent.

"Have you always been blind, or did it come on afterwards——?"

"Afterwards," he answered quickly. "A cursed gutta serena."

"Venice is a fine city; I have always had a fancy to go there."

The old man's face lighted up, the wrinkles began to work, he was violently excited.

"If I went with you, you would not lose your time," he said.

"Don't talk about Venice to our Doge," put in the fiddle, "or you will start him off, and he has stowed away a couple of bottles as it is—has the prince!"

"Come, strike up, Daddy Canard!" added the flageolet, and the three began to play. But while they executed the four figures of a square dance, the Venetian was scenting my thoughts; he guessed the great interest I felt in him. The dreary, dispirited look died out of his face, some mysterious hope brightened his features and slid like a blue flame over his wrinkles. He smiled and wiped his brow, that fearless, terrible brow of his, and at length grew gay like a man mounted on his hobby.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Eighty-two."

"How long have you been blind!"

"For very nearly fifty years," he said, and there was that in his tone which told me that his regret was for something more than his lost sight, for great power of which he had been robbed.

"Then why do they call you 'the Doge'?" I asked.

"Oh, it is a joke. I am a Venetian noble, and I might have been a Doge like anyone else."

"What is your name?"

"Here, in Paris, I am Père Canet," he said. "It was the only way of spelling my name on the register. But in Italy I am Marco Facino Cane, Prince of Varese."

"What, are you descended from the great *condottiere*

Facino Cane, whose lands won by the sword were taken by the Dukes of Milan?"

"*È vero,*" returned he. "His son's life was not safe under the Visconti; he fled to Venice, and his name was inscribed on the Golden Book. And now neither Cane nor Golden Book are in existence." His gesture startled me; it told of patriotism extinguished and weariness of life.

"But if you were once a Venetian senator, you must have been a wealthy man. How did you lose your fortune?"

"In evil days."

He waved away the glass of wine handed to him by the flageolet, and bowed his head. He had no heart to drink. These details were not calculated to extinguish my curiosity.

As the three ground out the music of the square dance, I gazed at the old Venetian noble, thinking thoughts that set a young man's mind afire at the age of twenty. I saw Venice and the Adriatic; I saw her ruin in the ruin of the face before me. I walked to and fro in that city, so beloved of her citizens; I went from the Rialto Bridge, along the Grand Canal, and from the Riva degli Schiavoni to the Lido, returning to St. Mark's, that cathedral so unlike all others in its sublimity. I looked up at the windows of the Casa Doro, each with its different sculptured ornaments; I saw old palaces rich in marbles, saw all the wonders which a student beholds with the more sympathetic eyes because visible things take their color of his fancy, and the sight of realities cannot rob him of the glory of his dreams. Then I traced back a course of life for this latest scion of a race of *condottieri,* tracking down his misfortunes, looking for the reasons of the deep moral and physical degradation out of which the lately revived sparks of greatness and nobility shone so much the more brightly. My ideas, no doubt, were passing through his mind, for all processes of thought-communications are far more swift, I think, in blind people, because their blindness compels them to concentrate their attention. I had not long to wait for proof that we were in sympathy in this way. Facino Cane left off playing, and came up to me. "Let us go out!" he said; his tones thrilled

through me like an electric shock. I gave him my arm, and we went.

Outside in the street he said, "Will you take me back to Venice? will you be my guide? Will you put faith in me? You shall be richer than ten of the richest houses in Amsterdam or London, richer than Rothschild; in short, you shall have the fabulous wealth of the *Arabian Nights*."

The man was mad, I thought; but in his voice there was a potent something which I obeyed. I allowed him to lead, and we went in the direction of the Fossés de la Bastille, as if he could see; walking till he reached a lonely spot down by the river, just where the bridge has since been built at the junction of the Canal Saint-Martin and the Seine. Here he sat down on a stone, and I, sitting opposite to him, saw the old man's hair gleaming like threads of silver in the moonlight. The stillness was scarcely troubled by the sound of the far-off thunder of traffic along the boulevards; the clear night air and everything about us combined to make a strangely unreal scene.

"You talk of millions to a young man," I began, "and do you think that he will shrink from enduring any number of hardships to gain them? Are you not laughing at me?"

"May I die unshriven," he cried vehemently, "if all that I am about to tell you is not true. I was one-and-twenty years old, like you at this moment. I was rich, I was handsome, and a noble by birth. I began with the first madness of all—with Love. I loved as no one can love nowadays. I have hidden myself in a chest, at the risk of a dagger thrust, for nothing more than the promise of a kiss. To die for Her—it seemed to me to be a whole life in itself. In 1760 I fell in love with a lady of the Vendramin family: she was eighteen years old, and married to a Sagredo, one of the richest senators, a man of thirty, madly in love with his wife. My mistress and I were guiltless as cherubs when the *sposo* caught us together talking of love. He was armed, I was not, but he missed me; I sprang upon him and killed him with my two hands, wringing his neck as if he had been a chicken. I wanted Bianca to fly with me; but

she would not. That is the way with women. So I went alone. I was condemned to death, and my property was confiscated and made over to my next-of-kin; but I had carried off my diamonds, five of Titian's pictures taken down from their frames and rolled up, and all my gold.

"I went to Milan, no one molested me, my affair in nowise interested the State.—One small observation before I go further," he continued, after a pause, "whether it is true or no that the mother's fancies at the time of conception or in the months before birth can influence her child, this much is certain, my mother during her pregnancy had a passion for gold, and I am the victim of a monomania, of a craving for gold which must be gratified. Gold is so much a necessity of life for me, that I have never been without it; I must have gold to toy with and finger. As a young man I always wore jewelry, and carried two or three hundred ducats about with me wherever I went."

He drew a couple of gold coins from his pocket and showed them to me as he spoke.

"I can tell by instinct when gold is near. Blind as I am, I stop before the jewelers' shop windows. That passion was the ruin of me; I took to gambling to play with gold. I was not a cheat, I was cheated, I ruined myself. I lost all my fortune. Then the longing to see Bianca once more possessed me like a frenzy. I stole back to Venice and found her again. For six months I was happy; she hid me in her house and fed me. I thought thus deliciously to finish my days. But the Provveditore courted her, and guessed that he had a rival; we in Italy can feel that. He played the spy upon us, and surprised us together in bed, base wretch! You may judge what a fight for life it was; I did not kill him outright, but I wounded him dangerously.

"That adventure broke my luck. I have never found another Bianca; I have known great pleasures; but among the most celebrated women of the court of Louis XV. I never found my beloved Venetian's charm, her love, her great qualities.

"The Provveditore called his servants, the palace was surrounded and entered; I fought for my life that I might die

beneath Bianca's eyes; Bianca helped me to kill the Provveditore. Once before she had refused flight with me; but after six months of happiness she wished only to die with me, and received several thrusts. I was entangled in a great cloak that they flung over me, carried down to a gondola, and hurried to the Pozzi dungeons. I was twenty-two years old; I gripped the hilt of my broken sword so hard, that they could only have taken it from me by cutting off my hand at the wrist. A curious chance, or rather the instinct of self-preservation, led me to hide the fragment of the blade in a corner of my cell, as if it might still be of use. They tended me; none of my wounds were serious. At two-and-twenty one can recover from anything. I was to lose my head on the scaffold. I shammed illness to gain time. It seemed to me that the canal lay just outside my cell. I thought to make my escape by boring a hole through the wall and swimming for my life. I based my hopes on the following reasons.

"Every time that the jailer came with my food, there was light enough to read directions written on the walls—'Side of the Palace,' 'Side of the Canal,' 'Side of the Vaults.' At last I saw a design in this, but I did not trouble myself much about the meaning of it; the actual incomplete condition of the Ducal Palace accounted for it. The longing to regain my freedom gave me something like genius. Groping about with my fingers, I spelt out an Arabic inscription on the wall. The author of the work informed those to come after him that he had loosened two stones in the lowest course of masonry and hollowed out eleven feet beyond underground. As he went on with his excavations, it became necessary to spread the fragments of stone and mortar over the floor of his cell. But even if jailers and inquisitors had not felt sure that the structure of the buildings was such that no watch was needed below, the level of the Pozzi dungeons being several steps below the threshold, it was possible gradually to raise the earthen floor without exciting the warder's suspicions.

"The tremendous labor had profited nothing—nothing at least to him that began it. The very fact that it was

left unfinished told of the unknown worker's death. Unless his devoted toil was to be wasted forever, his successor must have some knowledge of Arabic, but I had studied Oriental languages at the Armenian Convent. A few words written on the back of the stone recorded the unhappy man's fate; he had fallen a victim to his great possessions; Venice had coveted his wealth and seized upon it. A whole month went by before I obtained any result; but whenever I felt my strength failing as I worked, I heard the chink of gold, I saw gold spread before me, I was dazzled by diamonds.—Ah! wait.

"One night my blunted steel struck on wood. I whetted the fragment of my blade and cut a hole; I crept on my belly like a serpent; I worked naked and mole-fashion, my hands in front of me, using the stone itself to gain a purchase. I was to appear before my judges in two days' time, I made a final effort, and that night I bored through the wood and felt that there was space beyond.

"Judge of my surprise when I applied my eye to the hole. I was in the ceiling of a vault, heaps of gold were dimly visible in the faint light. The Doge himself and one of the Ten stood below; I could hear their voices and sufficient of their talk to know that this was the Secret Treasury of the Republic, full of the gifts of Doges and reserves of booty called the Tithe of Venice from the spoils of military expeditions. I was saved!

"When the jailer came I proposed that he should help me to escape and fly with me, and that we should take with us as much as we could carry. There was no reason for hesitation; he agreed. Vessels were about to sail for the Levant. All possible precautions were taken. Bianca furthered the schemes which I suggested to my accomplice. It was arranged that Bianca should only rejoin us in Smyrna for fear of exciting suspicion. In a single night the hole was enlarged, and we dropped down into the Secret Treasury of Venice.

"What a night that was! Four great casks full of gold stood there. In the outer room silver pieces were piled in heaps, leaving a gangway between by which to cross the

chamber. Banks of silver coins surrounded the walls to the height of five feet.

"I thought the jailer would go mad. He sang and laughed and danced and capered among the gold, till I threatened to strangle him if he made a sound or wasted time. In his joy he did not notice at first the table where the diamonds lay. I flung myself upon these, and deftly filled the pockets of my sailor's jacket and trousers with the stones. Ah Heaven! I did not take the third of them. Gold ingots lay underneath the table. I persuaded my companion to fill as many bags as we could carry with the gold, and made him understand that this was our only chance of escaping detection abroad.

"'Pearls, rubies, and diamonds might be recognized,' I told him.

"Covetous though we were, we could not possibly take more than two thousand livres' weight of gold, which meant six journeys across the prison to the gondola. The sentinel at the water-gate was bribed with a bag containing ten livres weight of gold; and as for the two gondoliers, they believed they were serving the Republic. At daybreak we set out.

"Once upon the open sea, when I thought of that night, when I recollected all that I had felt, when the vision of that great hoard arose before my eyes, and I computed that I had left behind thirty millions in silver, twenty in gold, and many more in diamonds, pearls, and rubies—then a sort of madness began to work in me. I had the gold fever.

"We landed at Smyrna and took ship at once for France. As we went on board the French vessel, Heaven favored me by ridding me of my accomplice. I did not think at the time of all the possible consequences of this mishap, and rejoiced not a little. We were so completely unnerved by all that had happened, that we were stupid, we said not a word to each other, we waited till it should be safe to enjoy ourselves at our ease. It was not wonderful that the rogue's head was dizzy. You shall see how heavily God has punished me.

"I never knew a quiet moment until I had sold two-thirds of my diamonds in London or Amsterdam, and held the value of my gold dust in a negotiable shape. For five years I hid myself in Madrid, then in 1770 I came to Paris with a Spanish name, and led as brilliant a life as may be. Then in the midst of my pleasures, as I enjoyed a fortune of six millions, I was smitten with blindness. I do not doubt but that my infirmity was brought on by my sojourn in the cell and my work in the stone, if, indeed, my peculiar faculty for 'seeing' gold was not an abuse of the power of sight which predestined me to lose it. Bianca was dead.

"At this time I had fallen in love with a woman to whom I thought to link my fate. I had told her the secret of my name; she belonged to a powerful family; she was a friend of Mme. du Barry; I hoped everything from the favor shown me by Louis XV.; I trusted in her. Acting on her advice, I went to England to consult a famous oculist, and after a stay of several months in London she deserted me in Hyde Park. She had stripped me of all that I had, and left me without resource. Nor could I make complaint, for to disclose my name was to lay myself open to the vengeance of my native city; I could appeal to no one for aid, I feared Venice. The woman put spies about me to exploit my infirmity. I spare you a tale of adventures worthy of Gil Blas.—Your Revolution followed. For two whole years that creature kept me at the Bicêtre as a lunatic, then she gained admittance for me at the Blind Asylum; there was no help for it, I went. I could not kill her; I could not see; and I was so poor that I could not pay another arm.

"If only I had taken counsel with my jailer, Benedetto Carpi, before I lost him, I might have known the exact position of my cell, I might have found my way back to the Treasury and returned to Venice when Napoleon crushed the Republic——

"Still, blind as I am, let us go back to Venice! I shall find the door of my prison, I shall see the gold through the prison walls, I shall hear it where it lies under the water; for the events which brought about the fall of Venice befell in such a way that the secret of the hoard must have perished

with Bianca's brother, Vendramin, a Doge to whom I looked to make my peace with the Ten. I sent memorials to the First Consul; I proposed an agreement with the Emperor of Austria; everyone sent me about my business for a lunatic. Come! we will go to Venice; let us set out as beggars, we shall come back millionaires. We will buy back my estates, and you shall be my heir! You shall be Prince of Varese!"

My head was swimming. For me his confidences reached the proportions of tragedy; at the sight of that white head of his and beyond it the black water in the trenches of the Bastille lying still as a canal in Venice, I had no words to answer him. Facino Cane thought, no doubt, that I judged him, as the rest had done, with a disdainful pity; his gesture expressed the whole philosophy of despair.

Perhaps his story had taken him back to happy days and to Venice. He caught up his clarionet and made plaintive music, playing a Venetian boat-song with something of his lost skill, the skill of the young patrician lover. It was a sort of *Super flumina Babylonis.* Tears filled my eyes. Any belated persons walking along the Boulevard Bourdon must have stood still to listen to an exile's last prayer, a last cry of regret for a lost name, mingled with memories of Bianca. But gold soon gained the upper hand, the fatal passion quenched the light of youth.

"I see it always," he said; "dreaming or waking, I see it; and as I pace to and fro, I pace in the treasury, and the diamonds sparkle. I am not as blind as you think; gold and diamonds light up my night, the night of the last Facino Cane, for my title passes to the Memmi. My God! the murderer's punishment was not long delayed! *Ave Maria,*" and he repeated several prayers that I did not heed.

"We will go to Venice!" I said, when he rose.

"Then I have found a man!" he cried, with his face on fire.

I gave him my arm and went home with him. We reached the gates of the Blind Asylum just as some of the wedding guests were returning along the street, shouting at the tops of their voices. He squeezed my hand.

"Shall we start to-morrow?" he asked.

"As soon as we can get some money."

"But we can go on foot. I will beg. I am strong, and you feel young when you see gold before you."

Facino Cane died before the winter was out after a two months' illness. The poor man had taken a chill.

PARIS, *March* 1836.

AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR

AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR

(*Un Épisode sous la Terreur*)

ABOUT eight o'clock in the evening of January 22, 1793, an old gentlewoman walked down the steep declivity of the Saint-Martin suburb, ending at the church of Saint-Laurent, Paris. Footfalls could scarcely be heard, for the snow had fallen heavily during the day. The streets were deserted. The fear, natural to a profound silence, was further strengthened by the terror by which the whole of France was then stricken. The old gentlewoman had not met anyone. Her dim and failing sight prevented her from seeing afar off a few pedestrians, thinly scattered as shadows, along the broad way of the faubourg.

Bravely she walked through the solitude as though her age might prove a talisman against all dangers; but, after leaving the Rue des Morts, she thought she heard the heavy and firm tread of a man behind her. She felt that unconsciously she had been listening to this tramp for some length of time. She attempted to walk faster, terrified at the thought of being followed; the bright light of a store-window seemed to offer a solution of the doubt that troubled her. In the shadow beyond the horizontal rays of light cast across the pavement, she abruptly turned around and plainly perceived a human figure dimly looming through the mist. That one imperfect glimpse was enough. For an instant she staggered under a stress of terror; no longer was there room for doubt that this man unknown had, step by step, tracked her from her house. The hope of escape from this spy gave strength to her weakened limbs. She ran for a few minutes, reached a confectionery store, entered it and fell, rather than sat, upon a chair standing in front of the counter. A young woman, who was working embroidery, looked up on hearing the creaking latch of the door, and, recognizing through the glass door an antiquated mantle of purple

silk which the old lady wore, hurried to open a drawer as if intending to take from thence something that she had to give her. Both the action and appearance of the young woman implied a wish to speedily relieve herself of the company of her strange and unwelcome visitor. She found the drawer empty and gave utterance to an exclamation of anger. Without appearing to notice the old lady she came quickly from behind the counter and, going to the rear room, called her husband, who immediately responded.

"Where have you put——?" she asked him, in a mysterious whisper, not finishing the sentence, but calling to his notice the antiquated person, with a meaning glance.

The confectioner could see nothing but the great hood of black silk encircled with ribbons of purple which the stranger wore; he retired, with a motion to his wife which plainly meant, "Can you imagine I should leave *that* on the counter?"

The visitor remained silent and immobile, and the wife, astonished at this, was moved with compassion and curiosity as she viewed her. It was plainly to be seen that some recent terror had spread an extra paleness over the complexion of a face naturally livid, and like that of one given up to secret austerities. The covering of her head was arranged to conceal the hair, whitened doubtless by age, for the cleanliness of the collar she wore precluded the idea of her wearing powder. Her countenance was grave and noble, but this concealment of its natural adornment gave an air of monastical severity. The young storekeeper was sure that the stranger was one of the proscribed nobles and that she most probably had belonged to the Court.

"Madame?" she said with formal respect, forgetful of the proscribed title.

The old lady answered not. Some alarming object might have been painted upon the window of the store, her eyes were so fixed upon it.

"What is the matter, citizeness?" the master of the place inquired as he re-entered. He then drew the attention of his visitor to a small, blue cardboard box and held it out to her.

"It is nothing, my friends, nothing," she made answer in

gentlest tones, raising her eyes to give the proprietor a grateful look. Thus seeing a Phrygian [1] cap upon his head, she gave utterance to a low cry: "Ah! you it is that have betrayed me!"

A shrug, the deprecating gesture of horror, was the reply made by both the young woman and her husband. The unknown lady reddened as she felt a relief of feeling for her unjust suspicion.

"Excuse me," she said with childish affability. After taking a gold louis from her pocket she tendered it to the confectioner, saying, "Here is the sum agreed upon."

Poor folk can readily divine a disguised poverty. The storekeeper and his wife gave each a glance at the other which expressed the same thought. The coin was doubtless her last one. Her eyes sadly rested upon it and her hands tremblingly offered it. Yet no avarice showed in this dumb entreaty. The full extent of her sacrifice was manifestly apparent to her. Her features showed the undoubted tracings of hunger and want. They were legible as those of asceticism and timidity. Her attire showed vestiges of luxury. It was silk, well-worn; the mantle, though faded, was clean; the laces carefully darned; it was, in all, the remnants of opulence. The pair of storekeepers were divided between pity and self-interest; they soothed their tradesmen consciences with phrases:

"Citizeness, you appear but feeble——"

"Perhaps madame would take something?" said the wife, cutting off her husband.

"We have good soup," he added.

"It is very cold; it may be that madame is made chill with her walk; you may rest here and warm yourself."

"He is not so black as he is painted, this devil," cried the husband.

These kind words won the heart of the old lady. She told them that a man had followed her and she was afraid of returning alone.

"And is that all?" said the man with the Phrygian cap. "Wait for me, citizeness."

[1] The distinguishing sign of the Jacquerie.

He gave the louis to his wife. His storekeeping soul was moved by a resemblance to gratitude which ever slips into such petty minds when an exorbitant price has been received for an article of little value. He donned the uniform of the National Guard, took up his cap, slung on his sword, and appeared under arms. Meantime the wife had been reflecting. As often occurs in many hearts, reflection will close the open hand of benevolence. She was afraid lest her husband should become mixed up in some dangerous affair; ill at ease and anxious, she pulled the tail of his coat, intending to stop his going. The worthy man, however, obeyed the dictates of charity and offered himself as the lady's escort.

"Is the man who has affrighted her now prowling outside?" asked the wife tremblingly.

"I am afraid so," said the old lady, very simply.

"Suppose that he is a spy. It may be a conspiracy. Don't go. Take back the box." The sudden compassion that had warmed him was chilled by these words whispered in his ear by the wife of his bosom.

"Well, there, I will say two words to the fellow and get rid of him," he said. He opened the door and hurried out.

Passive as a child and nearly paralyzed with fear the old gentlewoman again sat down. The confectioner very shortly returned; his face, red by nature and further scorched by the fires of his bakery, had suddenly turned pale, and he was in such extreme terror that his legs trembled and his eyes were drunken with fear.

"Wretched aristocrat!" he shrieked in fury, "would you cut off our heads? Go away from here, move your heels, let me see them, don't you dare to come back; you must not suppose that I will supply you with the means for conspiracy."

Thus saying the confectioner made an effort to regain possession of the little box which was ensconced in one of the old lady's pockets. The bold hands of the storekeeper had barely touched her clothes when she sprang to the open door, preferring to meet danger without protection, other than God's, than to restore what she had purchased. She assumed the agility of youth, disappeared through the door-

way, and left the husband and wife crushed with trembling and amazement.

When she found herself alone on the street she walked rapidly; but soon her strength deserted her as she once more heard the creaking of the snow under the heavy footsteps of the spy. Perforce she stopped short; the man did likewise. Fain would she have spoken to him, but she dared not; either by reason of her terror or a lack of wonted intelligence she could not even look at him. Somewhat recovering she slowly resumed her walk. Step by step did the man measure hers, he kept the same distance behind her, moving as her shadow. As the silent couple repassed the church of Saint-Laurent the clock struck nine.

It is the nature of even the weakest souls to fall back into tranquillity after a time of violent agitation; for our bodily powers are limited though our feelings may be manifold. So the old gentlewoman, not receiving any injury from her apparent annoyer, began to imagine him a secret friend watching over and protecting her. She weighed in her mind the details of numerous other appearances of the mysterious attendant and tried to find some plausible pretext for this so consoling thought. She took pleasure in giving credit to him for good, rather than discredit for sinister motives. Forgetting the terror he had evidently excited in the confectioner, she walked on with a firmer tread toward the higher portion of the Faubourg Saint-Martin.

In about half an hour's time she came to a house near the junction of the main street of the suburb with that one running out to the Pantin barrier. To-day this is one of the loneliest streets in all Paris. The north wind blew from the Buttes Chaumont and whistled among the houses, or properly cottages, sparsely scattered through the thinly inhabited little valley where the fences are built of mud and refuse bones. This woe-begone district is the natural home of poverty and grim despair. The man, intent on following the poor creature—courageously threading these gloomy and silent streets—appeared struck with the spectacle. He paused reflectingly, standing in a hesitating manner, being hardly visible by the light of a street lantern which flicker-

ingly pierced the fog. Terror gave sight to the gentlewoman and she fancied that she saw a something sinister on the face of this unknown man. Her terrors again revived, but profiting by his curious hesitation she swept like a shadow to the portal of the isolated dwelling, touched a spring, and disappeared with phantasmagoric alertness. The man stood motionless, gazing at the house, which was, as it were, a type of the miserable buildings of the district.

The hovel, tottering to its fall, was built of rough blocks of porous stone, its coating of yellow stucco was seamed with cracks, and only seemed to be awaiting a rough wind for its utter demolition. The brown tiled roof, covered with moss, had sunk in numerous spots, giving the impression that the weight of the accumulated snow might crush it down at any moment. There were three windows in each story; their frames rotten with dampness and shrunken with the heat of the sun; it was plain that the outer cold must penetrate to the interior. This lonely dwelling stood like an ancient tower that Time had forgotten to raze. Irregularly cut in the roof were the garret windows whence gleamed a faint light; the rest of the house was in dense obscurity. The old lady with difficulty climbed the clumsy stairway, keeping a fast hold of the rope baluster. She lightly knocked on the door of an apartment in the roof, entered and hastily seated herself on a chair offered her by an old man.

"Hide! hide yourself!" she cried. "It is but seldom we go out, yet are our errands known, our steps watched——"

"What has occurred?" asked another old woman, sitting near the small fire.

"The man who has been hanging about the house since yesterday followed me to-night."

The occupants of the place looked at each other in terror. The old man was the least concerned of the trio; he was in the greatest danger. When misfortune and the yoke of persecution oppress, a courageous man begins, as it were, to prepare for the sacrifice of himself; he looks upon each day as a victory won from Fate. The anxiety which shone in the eyes of the two women, fixed as they were upon the

old man, proved conclusively that he and he alone was the object of their fear.

"Shall we distrust God, my sisters?" he said in a hollow, impressive voice. "Did we not chant praises to Him amidst the cries of assassins and victims in the convent? Surely if it so pleased Him to save me from that slaughter, it must have been for some destiny which, without a murmur, I shall accept. The good God ever affords protection to His own, He disposes of them according to His ever-gracious will. It is of yourselves that we should think—not of me."

"No," said the first woman; "what comparison can there be between our lives and that of a priest?"

"I have considered myself as dead," said the nun seated near the fire, "since the day that I found myself outside the Abbaye des Chelles."

"Here," said the one who had lately entered, holding out the little blue box to the priest, "here are the holy wafers—Hark!" she cried, interrupting herself. "I hear someone on the stairs."

All three listened intently. The noise ceased.

"Do not be alarmed," said the abbé, "even should anyone request an entrance. A faithful and reliable person has arranged matters to cross the frontier; he will shortly call here for letters I have already written to the Duc de Langeais and the Marquis de Beauséant, telling them what measures they must adopt to get you out of this dreadful country, thus to save you from the death or misery that you must, otherwise, here undergo."

"Can you not follow us?" said the two nuns, in soft, despairing tones.

"My place is near the victims," said the priest simply.

The nuns sat silent, gazing at him with rapt admiration.

"Sister Martha," he said, speaking to the nun who had fetched the wafers, "the messenger must answer '*Fiat voluntas*' to the word 'Hosanna.'"

"There is someone on the stairway," cried the other sister, at the same time quickly uncovering a hiding-place bored near the edge of the roof.

This time the steps of a man, sounding in the deep silence

of the rough stairs, were plainly to be heard as he encountered the gnarled boards and the cakes of hardened mud. The priest, with much difficulty, slid into the narrow niche and the nuns hastily covered him with clothes.

"You may shut me in, Sister Agatha," he said in a smothered voice.

Hardly was he in hiding when three knocks upon the door-jamb made the nuns tremble with apprehension. They consulted each other with their eyes, for speak they dared not. They were like the plants of a conservatory, after their forty years of separation from the world, which wilt when exposed to the outer air. They knew none other than the life of the convent, that only were they accustomed to, no other could they conceive of; their ideas, as their life, were bounded by its walls; and when, one morning, their bars and gratings were razed to the ground they shuddered to find themselves free. One may imagine the kind of imbecility which the events of the Revolution, enacted under their eyes, must have produced in these simple souls. They were quite incapable of harmonizing the ideas of the convent with the exigencies of ordinary life; they comprehended not their own situation; like children who had ever had parental care, now severed from their maternal guardianship, they had ceased not to pray as other children cease not to cry. Thus in the presence of imminent danger they remained dumb, passive, and had no other defense than the resignation of the Christian.

The intending intruder was left to interpret their silence as he might, but presently he opened the door and gave view of himself. The consternation of the two nuns was great, and they trembled as they recognized the person who had watched the house for some days past and had seemed to make inquiries about its inmates. They stood stock-still, looking him over with a disturbed curiosity, like as would the children of savages examining a being from another clime. The stranger was very tall and stout, yet there was nothing indicating that he was a bad man. The immobility of the sisters was reproduced in himself, he remained without motion, his eyes roving slowly around the room. On planks were two bundles of straw which served as the nuns' beds.

In the center of the room was a table, upon it a copper candlestick, a few dishes, three knives, and a round loaf of bread. The fire in the grate was low, and the few sticks of wood piled in a corner of the room gave unmistakable evidence of the poverty of the occupants. The walls, once painted, now much defaced, showed the wretched state of the roof through which the rain had trickled, leaving a network of brown stains. A sacred relic, rescued, no doubt, from the looting of the Abbaye des Chelles, adorned the mantel. Three chairs, two chests, and a broken set of drawers comprised the whole of the furniture. A doorway near the fireplace showed the probability of an inner apartment.

The man had soon mentally possessed himself of the inventory of this poor cell. Across his face came an expression of pity; he threw a glance beaming with kindliness upon the two startled women and appeared as much embarrassed as themselves. The strange silence in which all three stood and faced each other, apparently long, really lasted but a moment, the stranger seeming to realize the weakness and inexperience of the poor helpless creatures. In a voice which he strove to render gentle, he said:

"I have not come as an enemy, citizenesses." He paused, then resuming: "My sisters, should harm happen to you, be sure that I shall not have been the cause. I have come to beg a favor of you."

Still they remained silent.

"If I ask too much—if I annoy you—I will at once depart; believe me, though, that I am heartily devoted to you; should there be any service I can render you, command me without scruple. I, and I alone, perhaps, am above the law, since the King no longer exists."

These words given with the true ring of honesty induced Sister Agatha, a nun belonging to the ducal house of Langeais, whose manner showed that she had at one time lived amid the festivities of life and inhaled the breath of Court, to gravely point to a chair as who should say: "Be seated." The unknown showed his pleasure by an exclamation, partly of melancholy, as he interpreted the gesture. He

respectfully awaited the seating of the sisters and then obeyed it.

"You have given shelter," he said, "to a venerable abbé who has not sworn allegiance to the Republic, who most miraculously escaped the massacre at the Carmelite convent."

"*Hosanna*," said Sister Agatha, suddenly interrupting the stranger, and looking at him anxiously and curiously.

"That is not his name, I believe," he made reply.

"But, monsieur, there is no priest here," said Sister Martha quickly, "and——"

"Then you should be more careful," said the visitor mildly, reaching to the table and taking up a breviary. "I can scarcely think you understand Latin and——"

The extreme distress depicted on the features of the poor nuns warned him that he had gone too far; their agitation was excessive, their eyes filled with tears.

"Be not afraid," he said; "I know both the names of your guest and yourselves. During the past three days I have learned of your indigence and your brave devotion to the venerable Abbé de——"

"Hush!" said Sister Agatha, ingenuously placing a finger on her lips.

"You see, my sisters, that had I had the horrible design of betraying you, that I might easily have done so time and again."

As he uttered these words the priest crawled from his prison and appeared in the center of the room.

"I cannot think, monsieur," he said courteously, "that you can be one of my persecutors. I trust you. What do you desire of me?"

The saint-like confidence of the aged man and the nobility of soul which showed on his countenance might well have disarmed an assassin. The mysterious being who had agitated this penurious home, this place of divine resignation, stood in contemplation of the group before him; then he addressed the abbé in a trusting voice, with these words:

"My father, I came to ask you to celebrate a Mass for the repose of the soul—of—of a sacred being whose body can never be laid in holy ground."

The abbé made an involuntary shudder. The nuns did not know of whom it was that the strange man had spoken; they stood with their necks stretched, their faces turned toward the speaker, plainly showing eager curiosity. The ecclesiastic looked searchingly at the stranger; undoubted anxiety was discernible on every feature, and his eyes offered an earnest, ardent prayer.

"Yes," said the priest at length. "At midnight return here and I shall then be ready to celebrate the only requiem Mass that we are able to offer as expiation of the crime of which you speak."

A shiver agitated the unknown; then a sweet and solemn joy appeared to rise above some great and secret grief. He respectfully saluted the abbé and the two saintly women, and departed with a mute gratitude of which these charitable souls knew so well the interpretation.

After two hours the stranger returned, knocked cautiously at the garret-door, and was admitted by Mlle. de Langeais, who led him to the inner room of the lowly refuge, where all was in readiness for the ceremony. The old set of drawers had been placed by the nuns between the two chimney-flues, its scarred edges being hid beneath a magnificent altar-cloth of green moiré. A large ebony and ivory crucifix hung on the discolored wall and stood out in bright relief from the adjacent bareness, and immediately caught the eye. Four small, slender tapers, which the sisters had managed to attach to the altar with sealing-wax, cast a dim glimmer hardly reflected by the dingy wall. These feeble rays barely lit up the rest of the chamber, but as their light illumined the sacred objects it looked like an aureola from heaven to enlighten the naked, undecorated altar.

The floor was damp. The attic-roof sloped sharply on each side of the room and was filled with crevices admitting the boisterous wind. Far from stately, there was never aught more solemn than this dismal service. A long, distant cry might easily have pierced the solemn silence—silence so profound that it gave majestic awe to this nocturnal scene. The poverty of the surroundings and the grandeur of the

ceremony made a strong contrast, arousing the holy terrors of religion. The aged nuns knelt on either side of the altar on the earthen-tiled floor with never a thought of its horrid dampness; they, with the priest robed in his pontifical vestments, prayed aloud; the latter placed a golden chalice, incrusted with gems, upon the altar—no doubt a sacred vessel saved from the pillage of the Abbaye des Chelles. Near this cup, which had been a royal gift, were arranged the wafers and wine of the Eucharist, contained in two drinking glasses hardly fit to grace the dingy tables of some mean tavern. The needed missal had been replaced with the priest's breviary, and lay on a corner of the impromptu altar. An earthen dish served as the ablution cup for the washing of those hands innocent and spotless of blood. It was at once majestic and paltry, poor yet noble, holy and profane in one.

Between the sisters the unknown knelt with pious mien. Then his eyes caught sight of the crêpe draping the chalice and crucifix—for, bereft of other means of making known the objects of this requiem Mass, the abbé had put God Himself in mourning—the mysterious visitor was seized with an all-powerful recollection and great beads of perspiration gathered on his forehead. The four actors in this awful drama gazed upon each other in sympathy, their souls acted each upon the other and communicated the feelings of all in a mysterious blending of holy pity. Their one thought, it seemed, might have evoked from the dead that sacred martyr whose mortal remains had been devoured by quick-lime, but whose ghost rose before them in full majestic royalty.

They were performing a requiem Mass without the presence of the dead. Four pious souls knelt in intercession to God for a king of France, they were making his funeral ceremony minus a coffin, in a chamber showing disjointed laths and unplastered beams. No thought of self sullied this purest of all devotions, this act of marvelous loyalty. Maybe to God it was the cup of cold water that weighed in the balance as a myriad of virtues. Monarchy was present in the prayers of the priest and the two poor women; it might be that Revolution was also there in the person of the mys-

terious visitor whose countenance showed the remorse that caused him to offer this solemn repentance.

In place of pronouncing the Latin words, "*Introibo ad altare Dei*," the abbé, with an intuition almost divine, looked down upon his congregation of three, who represented Christian France, and said, in words effectually effacing the meanness and squalor of the den: "We enter now into the sanctuary of God."

Solemn awe seized the hearers at these words, uttered with incisive unction. The great dome of St. Peter's in Rome never canopied God in more awful majesty to humanity than He now was, beneath this trembling roof, in the eyes of these Christians; making patent the truth that no mediation is needed between God and man. His glory descends from Himself alone. The warm piety of the unknown was evidently sincere—the feeling that held the monarch and these four servants of God was one. The sacred words resounded as celestial music in the silence. At one moment the unknown one broke down and wept; this was in the *Pater noster*, to which the abbé added a clause in Latin and which, it was apparent, the visitor understood and applied. "*Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semetipse*," or, "And forgive the regicides as Louis XVI. himself forgave them." The sisters saw the tears coursing down the virile cheeks of their visitor, and splashing fast on the tiled floor.

The Office of the Dead was intoned. The *Domine salvum fac regem*,[1] chanted in low tones, moved the hearts of these faithful monarchists as their thoughts turned to the infant King, for whom the prayer was offered, and who was now captive in the hands of his enemies. Perhaps fearing a further crime impending, in which he must needs perform an unwilling part, the unknown visitor shuddered. The service over, the curé motioned to the two nuns and they retired to the outer chamber. When he was alone with the unknown the old man approached him with a gentle sadness and said, in the tone of a father:

"My son, if your hands have been steeped in the blood of that holy martyr, the King, confess now yourself to me.

[1] Lord save the King.

There is no crime in the eyes of God which may not be washed away by a repentance as deep and sincere as yours seems to be."

An involuntary movement of terror escaped the stranger at these words; but he speedily resumed his stolid manner, and, looking on the priest with calm assurance, he said:

"My father," in a voice that nevertheless trembled, "no one can be more innocent than myself of the blood shed——"

"I verily believe it," said the priest.

He paused and further examined the penitent; then, his belief becoming certainty that he was one of those timorous members of the Assembly who sacrificed the sacred and inviolate head to save their own, he proceeded in a grave voice:

"Remember, my son, that much more than not having taken part in that great sin is necessary to absolve from guilt. Those who retained their sabers in their sheaths, when they should have drawn to defend their King, must render a heavy account to the King of Kings. Yes," said the venerable abbé, moving his head expressively, "yes, heavy indeed! by idly standing by they became the accomplices in a terrible transgression."

"Is it your belief," said the stranger in a tone of amazement, "that an indirect participation will be punished? The soldier under orders to form the line—was he guilty?"

The abbé hesitated.

He, the stranger, was glad of the dilemma that placed this Royalist between the two canons of passive obedience and the consecrated person of the King—the former in the minds of Monarchists should dominate the military system—and he readily accepted the hesitancy on the part of the priest as solving the doubts that troubled him. Then, so as to allow no time for the old Jansenist to further reflect, he said quickly:

"It would cause me to blush were I to offer you any fee whatever for the requiem Mass you have just celebrated for the rest of the soul of the King and for the ease of my conscience. Inestimable things can only be purchased by offerings without price. Be pleased to accept, monsieur, the

gift of a holy relic; it is yours; the time may be when you will realize its value."

Speaking these words he gave the ecclesiastic a small box of light weight. The priest involuntarily held out his hand and took it, for the solemn tone of the words and the manifest awe depicted on the stranger's face as he held the box filled him with fresh amazement. The two nuns were awaiting them as they entered the outer room together.

"You are residing," said the stranger, "in a house owned by Mucius Scævola, a plasterer living on the first floor, who is noted in this arrondissement for his patriotism. All the same, he is secretly devoted to the Bourbons. Formerly he was Monseigneur le Prince de Conti's huntsman, he owes everything to him. In this dwelling, so long as you may stay, you are in greater safety than you could be in any other part of France. Pray remain. Pious souls will supply your needs and will watch over and protect you; remain here awaiting without fear the coming of brighter days. A year hence, on that same twenty-first of January"[1] (he shuddered as he uttered these words), "I shall come again to once more celebrate the Mass of expiation——"

He could not end the sentence. He bowed to his silent auditors and, casting a last, lingering look upon the tokens of their poverty, he disappeared.

This event, to the two simple-minded women, had all the interest of romance. When the venerable abbé spoke to them of his mysterious gift, and in what a solemn manner it had been tendered by the stranger, it was placed upon the table and three anxious faces, dimly illumined by a tallow-candle, betrayed uncontrollable curiosity. Mlle. de Langeais opened the little box, she took from it an exquisite handkerchief of marvelous fineness, stained with perspiration. When she unfolded it they saw dark stains.

"That is blood!" said the abbé.

"It is marked with the royal crown!" cried the other nun.

The sisters let it fall, this precious relic, with gestures of horror. The mystery that enfolded their unknown visitant

[1] Louis XVI. was guillotined on this date.

was inexplicable to these ingenuous minds, and the abbé, from that day on, forbade himself to attempt the solving of the enigma.

The three recluses soon noticed that, in despite of the Terror, a powerful arm was outstretched above them. They first received firewood and victuals; then the sisters readily surmised that some woman must be associated with their protector, for linen and clothes came mysteriously to them; this gave them opportunity of going out without danger of observation from the aristocratic style of the only apparel they had been able to obtain; lastly, Mucius Scævola carried to them certificates of citizenship.

The necessary means to be taken to secure the safety of the abbé would often come from the most unexpected places, and it always proved so singularly opportune that it was evident that it could only have been given by some personage knowing the secrets of the State. Famine was rampant in Paris, yet they daily found at the door of their hovel rations of white bread, always laid there by invisible hands. They recognized, or thought they did, the agent of their benefactions in Mucius Scævola, as they were ever timely and just as needed, but the noble tenants of the dilapidated garret never doubted that the unknown being who, with them, had celebrated Mass on January 22, 1793, was their secret protector. A special prayer for him was added to their daily supplications; each night, each day these pious hearts prayed fervently for his happiness, prosperity, and redemption. God was implored to keep his feet from snares and to save him from his enemies, and to grant him a happy, long, and peaceful life.

Their gratitude, renewed daily, as it were, was impregnated with curiosity that grew more intense with each day. All the circumstances attending the advent of the stranger formed a ceaseless subject of conversation, conjectures were endless; this ultimately became a benefit of a special kind from their minds being thus occupied and distracted. They had quite resolved that, when he should attend on the next sad commemoration of the anniversary of the death of

Louis XVI., the unknown should not be allowed to escape the due expression of their gratitude.

At length that night, so impatiently awaited, arrived. At midnight the heavy footfalls resounded on the wooden stairs. The chamber was already arranged for the sacrament, the altar dressed. This time the sisters opened the door and hurried to show a light at the entrance. Mlle. de Langeais even descended a few stairs that she might get a first glimpse of their benefactor.

"Come!" said she, in an entreating, trembling voice. "Come, thou art expected."

The man raised his head, looked gloomily at the nun, and made no answer. She felt as if an ice-cold blanket had fallen upon her, and she kept silence. His aspect dried up the gratitude and curiosity of their hearts. It was probable he was less cold, less taciturn, less terrible than he seemed to these simple creatures to be, whose own emotions led them to expect a responsive echo of their flow of friendship. It was easy for them to descry that this mysterious one intended remaining a stranger, so they acquiesced with resignation. The abbé, though, fancied he detected a quickly repressed smile upon the visitor's lips, as he noted the preparations made for his reception. He listened to the Mass, prayed, and disappeared immediately, refusing in courteous tones the invitation extended by Mlle. de Langeais to remain and partake of the humble fare they had prepared for him.

After Thermidor the 9th the sisters and the Abbé de Marolles could traverse Paris without fear. The aged abbé paid his first visit to the Queen of Roses, a perfumery store kept by Citizen and Citizeness Ragon, formerly the Court perfumers, and esteemed for their faithfulness to the Bourbons, and whom the Vendéens utilized as a means of communication with the princes and the committees of Royalists in Paris. Abbé de Marolles wore the clothing prescribed by the Code; as he was leaving the portal of the store, situated between the church of Saint-Roch and the Rue des Fondeurs, a mob of people crowding down the Rue Saint-Honoré prevented his departure.

"What is it?" he said to Mme. Ragon.

"Nothing!" she replied, "but the tumbril and the executioner going to the Place Louis XV. Oh, we saw more than enough of that last year! But see now, only four days after the anniversary of the 21st of January, we can gaze upon it, that most horrid procession, with equanimity."

"How so?" inquired the abbé. "What you are saying is unchristian."

"But, M. l'Abbé, this is the execution of Robespierre's accomplices. They could not prevail to longer evade it, and, now, they in their turn are going the way they sent so many innocent ones."

The Rue Saint-Honoré was choked with the crowd which surged on like a wave. Above the ocean of heads the Abbé de Marolles, yielding to an irresistible impulse, saw, standing upright in the cart, the unknown visitor who but three days agone had joined in the second celebration of the Mass of commemoration.

"Who is that?" he said, "that one standing——"

"The executioner," answered M. Ragon, giving him the name he had under the monarchy.

"Help! help!" cried Mme. Ragon. "M. l'Abbé has fainted."

She quickly caught up a flask of toilet-vinegar and he was soon restored to consciousness.

"He must have given me," said the venerable abbé, "the handkerchief that the King used to wipe his brow as he was led to his martyrdom. Poor man! that steel-blade had a heart when all France was without one."

The perfumers thought the words of the abbé were those of delirium.

A PRINCESS'S SECRETS

The Princess lingered deliberately with d'Arthez

A PRINCESS'S SECRETS

To Théophile Gautier.

AFTER the disasters of the Revolution of July 1830 had wrecked the fortunes of many a noble family dependent upon the Court, Mme. la Princesse de Cadignan had the address to blame political events for the total ruin due in reality to her own extravagance. The Prince had left France with the royal family, but the Princess stayed on in Paris, the very fact of her husband's absence securing her from arrest. He, and he alone, was responsible for a burden of debt which could not be discharged by the sale of all his available property. The creditors had taken over the revenues of the entail, and the affairs of the great family were, in short, in as bad a way as the fortunes of the elder branch of the Bourbons. Things being thus, the Princesse de Cadignan (the lady so celebrated in her day as the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse) made up her mind to live in complete retirement, and tried to make the world forget her. And in the dizzy current of events which swept Paris away, Mme. de Maufrigneuse was soon lost to sight in the Princesse de Cadignan, and became almost a stranger to society; the new actors brought upon the stage by the Revolution of July knew nothing of the metamorphosis.

In France the title of duke takes precedence over all others, even over the title of prince; albeit it is laid down unequivocally in heraldry that titles signify absolutely nothing, and that all the nobly born are perfectly equal. This admirable theory was conscientiously put in practice in former times by the royal house of France; indeed, it is still carried out in the letter at any rate, for kings of France are careful to give their sons the simple title of count. By virtue of the same system Francis I. signed himself "Francis, Lord of Vanves," thereby eclipsing the splendid array of titles assumed by that pompous monarch, Charles V. Louis XI. had even gone further when he gave his daughter to Pierre de

Beaujeu, a simple gentleman. The feudal system was so thoroughly broken up by Louis XIV. that the title of duke in his reign became the supreme and most coveted honor.

Nevertheless, there are two or three families in France, in which the principality consists of great territorial possessions, handed down from former times, and in these it ranks above the duchy. The House of Cadignan is one of these exceptions, the eldest son is the Duc de Maufrigneuse, and the younger brothers are simply Chevaliers de Cadignan.

The Cadignans, like two princes of the House of Rohan in other times, have a right to a chair of state in their own house, and may keep a retinue of pages, gentlemen, in their service. This is a necessary piece of explanation, given partly to anticipate absurd criticisms from persons who know nothing of the matter, partly too as a record of an old stately order of things in a world which is said to be passing away, an order of things which some, who understand it but little, are very eager to abolish.

The Cadignans bear *or five fusils sable conjoined in fesse*, with the motto MEMINI, and a close crown, without supporters or lambrequins. What with the prevalent ignorance of heraldry in these days, and a mighty influx of foreigners to Paris, the title of prince is beginning to enjoy a certain vogue; but it is usually only a courtesy title. There are no real princes in France save those who inherit domains with their name, and are entitled to be addressed as "Your Highness." The disdain felt for the title by the old noblesse, and the reasons which led Louis XIV. to give supremacy to the rank of duke, prevented France from claiming the style of Highness for the few princes in existence (those of Napoleon's creation excepted). This is how the Princes de Cadignan came to rank nominally below other princes on the continent of Europe.

The persons known collectively as the Faubourg Saint-Germain protected the Princess; treating her with a respectful discretion due to a name that will always be honored, to misfortunes which no longer gave rise to talk, and to Mme. de Cadignan's beauty, which was all that remained of her faded glories. The world that she had adorned gave

her credit for thus taking the veil, as it were, and entering the cloister in her own house. For her, of all women, such a piece of good taste involved an immense sacrifice; and in France anything great is always so keenly appreciated, that the Princess's retreat gained for her all the ground that she had lost in public opinion while her splendor was at its height. Of her old friends among women, she only saw the Marquise d'Espard; and as yet she was never seen in public on great occasions, or at evening parties. The Princess and the Marquise called upon one another, very early in the morning, and, as it were, in secret; and when the Princess dined with her friend, the Marquise closed her doors to everyone else.

Mme. d'Espard's behavior was admirable. She changed her box at the Italiens, coming down from the first tier to a *baignoire* on the ground floor, so that Mme. de Cadignan could come and depart without being seen. Not every woman would have been capable of a piece of delicacy depriving her of the pleasure of dragging a former and fallen rival in her train, and posing as her benefactress. Thus enabled to dispense with ruinous toilets, the Princess went privately in the Marquise's carriage, which in public she would have refused to take. Nobody ever knew why Mme. d'Espard behaved in this way; but her conduct was sublime, involving a whole host of the little sacrifices which seem mere trifles in themselves, but taken as a whole reach giant's proportions. In 1832 the snows of three years had covered the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's adventures, whitening them so effectually that nothing short of a prodigious effort of memory could recall the heavy indictments formerly laid to her charge. Of the queen adored by so many courtiers, of the duchess whose levities might furnish a novelist with several volumes, there now remained an exquisitely fair woman of thirty-six, who might have passed for thirty in spite of her nineteen-year-old son.

Georges, Duc de Maufrigneuse, beautiful as Antinous, and poor as Job, was certain of a great career; and his mother's first wish was to see him married to a great fortune. Perhaps she meant to choose an heiress for him some day out

of Mme. d'Espard's salon, which was supposed to be the first in Paris; perhaps this was the real reason of her intimacy with the Marquise. The Princess, looking forward, saw another five years of retirement before her; five desolate lonely years; but if Georges was to marry well, her conduct must receive the hall-mark of virtue.

The Princess lived in a modest ground-floor flat in a mansion in the Rue de Miromesnil, where relics of bygone splendor had been turned to account. A great lady's elegance still pervaded everything. She had surrounded herself with beautiful things, which told their own story of a life in high spheres. The magnificent miniature of Charles X. above her chimney-piece was painted by Mme. de Mirbel, and bore the legend, "Given by the King," engraved on the frame. The companion picture was a portrait of Madame, who had been so peculiarly gracious to her. The album that shone conspicuous on one of the tables was an almost priceless treasure, which none of the bourgeoises that rule our modern money-making and censorious society would dare to exhibit in public. It was a piece of audacity that paints the Princess's character to admiration. The album was full of portraits, some thirty among them belonging to intimate friends—lovers, the world said. As to numbers, this was a slander; but with regard to some ten of them perhaps, as the Marquise d'Espard said, there was a good, broad foundation for the calumny. However that might be, Maxime de Trailles, de Marsay, Rastignac, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, General de Montriveau, the Marquises de Ronquerolles and d'Ajuda-Pinto, Prince Galathionne, the young Duc de Grandlieu, the young Duc de Rhétoré, the young Vicomte de Sérizy, and Lucien de Rubempré's beautiful face, had all received most flattering treatment from the brushes of the famous portrait-painters of the day. At this time the Princess only received two or three of the originals of the portraits, and pleasantly called the book "My Collection of Errors."

Adversity had made a good mother of Mme. la Princesse. Her amusements during the first fifteen years of the Restoration had left her little time to think of her son; but now, when she took refuge in obscurity, this illustrious egoist

bethought herself that maternal sentiment pushed to an extreme would win absolution for her. Her past life would be condoned by sentimental people, who will pardon anything to a fond mother, and she loved her son so much the better because she had nothing else left to love. Georges de Maufrigneuse was, for that matter, a son of whom any mother might have been proud. And the Princess had made all kinds of sacrifices for him. Georges had a stable and coach-house, and inhabited three daintily furnished rooms in the entresol above, which gave upon the street.

His mother stinted herself to keep a horse for him to ride, a cab-horse, and a diminutive servant. The Duke's tiger had a hard time of it! "Toby," once in the service of "the late Beaudenord"—for in this jocular manner young men of fashion were wont to allude to that ruined dandy—Toby, to repeat, now turned twenty-five years of age, and still supposed to be fourteen, must groom the horses, clean the cab or the tilbury, go out with his master, keep his rooms in order, and be on hand in the Princess's antechamber to admit visitors, if by any chance a visitor called on her.

When you considered the part that the beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had played under the Restoration; how she had been one of the queens of Paris, a radiant queen, leading a life so luxurious that even the wealthiest women of fashion in London might have taken lessons of her; it was something indescribably touching to see her in that mere nutshell of a place in the Rue de Miromesnil, only a few doors away from the huge Hôtel de Cadignan, which nobody was rich enough to live in, so that the speculative builder's hammer brought it down. The woman for whom thirty servants were scarce sufficient, the mistress of the finest salons and the prettiest *petits appartements* in which she entertained so splendidly, was now living in a suite of five rooms—an antechamber, a dining-room, a drawing-room, a bedroom, and dressing-room—with a couple of women-servants for her whole establishment.

"Ah! she is an admirable mother," that shrewd woman the Marquise d'Espard would remark, "and admirable without overdoing it. She is happy. Nobody would have believed

that such a frivolous woman would be capable of taking a resolution and following it up so persistently as she does. And our good Archbishop has encouraged her, he is goodness itself to her, he has just persuaded the dowager Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne to call upon her."

In any case, let us own that no one but a queen can abdicate, and descend nobly from the lofty elevation which is never utterly lost to her. It is only those who are conscious that they are nothing in themselves that will waste regrets on their decline, and pity themselves, and turn to a past that will never return for them. They know instinctively that success will not come twice. The Princess was forced to do without the rare flowers with which she had been wont to surround herself, a setting that enhanced her beauty, for no one could fail to compare her to a flower. Wherefore she had chosen her ground-floor flat with care, so as to enjoy a pretty little garden with flowering trees and a green grass-plot to brighten her quiet rooms all through the year.

Her annual income possibly amounted to twelve thousand francs or thereabouts, but even that modest sum was made up partly by an allowance from the old Duchesse de Navarreins (the young Duke's paternal aunt), partly by contributions from the Duchesse d'Uxelles, who was living on her estate in the country, and saving as none but dowager-duchesses can save; Harpagon was a mere tyro in comparison.

The Prince de Cadignan lived abroad, always at the orders of his exiled masters. He shared their adversity, serving them with a devotion as disinterested, and perhaps rather more intelligent than that of most other adherents of fallen royalty. His position was even now a protection to his wife in Paris. In such obscurity did the Princess live, and so little did her destitution arouse the suspicions of the Government, that a certain Marshal, to whom France owes an African province, used to meet Legitimist leaders at her house and hold counsel with them while Madame was making the attempt in La Vendée.

Foreseeing the approaching bankruptcy of love, and the drawing nigh of that fortieth year beyond which there lies

so little for a woman, the Princess launched forth into the realms of politics and philosophy. She took to reading!—she who for the last sixteen years had shown the utmost abhorrence of anything serious! Literature and politics to-day take the place of devoutness as the last refuge of feminine affectation. It was said in fashionable circles that Diane meant to write a book. During this transition period, when the beautiful woman of other days was preparing to fade into a woman of intellect, until such time as she should fade away for good, Diane made of the reception at her house a privilege in the highest degree flattering for the persons thus favored. Under cover of these occupations she contrived to hoodwink de Marsay, one of her early lovers, and now the most influential member of the Government of the Citizen King. Several times she received visits from the Prime Minister in the evening while the Legitimist leaders and the Marshal were actually assembled in her bedroom, discussing plans for winning back the kingdom, and forgetting in their deliberations that the kingdom was not to be won without the help of ideas—the one means of success overlooked by them. It was a pretty woman's revenge thus to inveigle a prime minister and use him as a screen for a conspiracy against his own government; the Princess wrote Madame the sprightliest account of an adventure worthy of the best days of the Fronde.

The young Duc de Maufrigneuse went to La Vendée, and contrived to come back again quietly and without committing himself, but not until he had shared Madame's perils. When all seemed lost, Madame sent him back, unfortunately perhaps, for a young man's impassioned vigilance might possibly have foiled treachery.

Great as Mme. de Maufrigneuse's transgressions might have been in the eyes of the middle-class matron, her son's behavior blotted them all out for the aristocratic world. It was something great and noble surely to risk the life of an only son and the heir to an historic name in this way. There are persons, reputed clever, who redeem the faults of private life by political services, and *vice versâ*. But the Princesse de Cadignan had acted without calculation of any kind.

Perhaps there is never calculation on the part of those who so conduct their lives; and circumstances account for a good half of many seeming inconsistencies.

On one of the first fine days in May 1833, the Marquise d'Espard and the Princess were taking a turn—they could scarcely be said to be taking a walk—along the one garden path beside the grass plot. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, the sun was taking leave of the garden for the day, but the air was warm with heat reflected from the walls, and the air was full of the scent of flowers brought by the Marquise.

"We shall lose de Marsay soon," Mme. d'Espard was saying, "and with him goes your last hope of fortune for the Duc de Maufrigneuse; since you played such a successful trick on that great politician, his affection for you has sensibly increased."

"My son shall never come to terms with the younger branch, even if he must starve first and I should have to work for him," returned the Princess. "But Berthe de Cinq-Cygne has no aversion for him."

"The younger generation is not bound in the same way as the older——"

"Let us say nothing about that. If I fail to tame the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, it will be quite bad enough to be forced to marry my son to some blacksmith's daughter, as young d'Esgrignon did."

"Did you love him?" asked the Marquise.

"No," the Princess answered gravely, "d'Esgrignon's naïveté was only a kind of provincial's callowness, as I found out a little too late, or too soon, if you prefer it."

"And de Marsay?"

"De Marsay played with me as if I were a doll. I was almost a girl. We never love the men who take the office of tutor upon themselves; they grate overmuch on our little susceptibilities."

"And that wretched boy who hanged himself?"

"Lucien? An Antinous and a great poet. I worshiped him in all conscience, and I might have been happy. But

he was in love with a girl of the town; and I gave him up to Mme. de Sérizy. . . . If he had cared to love me, should I have given him up?"

"What an odd thing, that you should come into collision with an Esther!"

"She was handsomer than I," said the Princess.—"Very soon I shall have spent three years in complete solitude," she went on after a pause. "Well, there has been nothing painful in the quiet. To you, and you only, I will venture to say that I have been happy. Adoration palled upon me; I was jaded without enjoyment; the surface impressions never went deeper into my heart. All the men that I had known were petty, mean, and superficial, I thought; not one of them did anything in the least unexpected; they had neither innocence, nor greatness, nor delicacy. I should have liked to find someone of whom I could stand in awe."

"Then, is it with you as it is with me, my dear? Have you tried to love and never found love?"

"Never," broke in the Princess, laying a hand on her friend's arm. The two women went across to a rustic bench under a mass of jessamine now flowering for the second time. Both had spoken words full of solemn import for women at their age.

"Like you," resumed the Princess, "I have been more loved, perhaps, than other women; but through so many adventures, I feel that I have never known happiness. I have done many reckless things, but always with an end in view, and that end receded as I advanced. My heart has grown old with an innocence unfathomed in it. Yes, a credulous first love lies unawakened beneath all the experience; and I feel too that I am young and fair, in spite of so much weariness, so many blighting influences. We may love, yet not be happy; we may be happy when we do not love; but to love and to be happy both, to know the two boundless joys of human experience—this is a miracle, and the miracle has not been worked for me."

"Nor for me," said Mme. d'Espard.

"A dreadful regret haunts me in my retreat; I have found pastimes, but I have not loved."

"What an incredible secret!"

"Ah! my dear, these are secrets that we can only confide to each other; nobody in Paris would believe us."

"And if we had not both passed our thirty-sixth year, perhaps we might not make these admissions."

"No. While we are young, we are stupidly fatuous on some points," assented the Princess. "Sometimes we behave like the poverty-stricken youths that play with a toothpick to make others believe that they have dined well."

"After all, here we are," Mme. d'Espard said, with bewitching grace, and a charming gesture as of innocence grown wise; "here we are, and there is still enough life in us, it seems to me, for a return game."

"When you told me the other day that Béatrix had gone off with Conti, I thought about it all night long," said the Princess, after a pause. "A woman must be very happy indeed to sacrifice her position and her future, and to give up the world forever like that."

"She is a little fool," Mme. d'Espard returned gravely. "Mlle. des Touches was only too delighted to be rid of Conti. Béatrix could not see that it was a strong proof that there was nothing in Conti when a clever woman gave him up without making a defense of her so-called happiness for a single moment."

"Then is she going to be unhappy?"

"She is unhappy now. What was the good of leaving her husband? What is it but an admission of weakness in a wife?"

"Then, do you think that Mme. de Rochefide's motive was not a desire to experience a complete love, that bliss of loving and being loved which for us both is still a dream?"

"No. She aped Mme. de Beauséant and Mme. de Langeais, who, between ourselves, would have been as great figures as la Vallière, or the Montespan, or Diane de Poitiers, or the Duchesses d'Étampes or de Chateauroux, in any age less commonplace than ours."

"Oh, with the king omitted, yes, my dear. Ah! if I could only call up those women, and ask them if——"

"But there is no necessity to call up the dead," broke in

the Marquise; "we know living women who are happy. A score of times I have begun intimate talk about this kind of thing with the Comtesse de Montcornet. For fifteen years she has been the happiest woman under the sun with that little Émile Blondet. Not an infidelity, not a thought from another; they are still as they were at the first. But somebody always comes to disturb us at the most interesting point. Then there is Rastignac and Mme. de Nucingen, and your cousin Mme. de Camps and that Octave of hers; there is a secret in these long attachments; they know something, dear, that we neither of us know. The world does us the exceeding honor to take us for *rouées* worthy of the Court of the Regency, and we are as innocent as two little boarding-school misses."

"I should be glad to have even that innocence," the Princess exclaimed mockingly; "ours is worse, there is something humiliating in it. There is no help for it! We will offer up the mortification to God in expiation of our fruitless quest of love; for it is scarcely likely, dear, that in our Martin's summer we shall find the glorious flower that did not bloom for us in May and June."

"That is not the question," rejoined the Marquise after a pause, filled by meditative retrospect. "We are still handsome enough to inspire love, but we shall never convince anyone of our innocence and virtue."

"If it were a falsehood, it should soon be garnished with commentaries, served up with the pretty art that makes a lie credible, and swallowed down like delicious fruit. But to make a truth credible!—Ah! the greatest men have perished in that attempt," added the Princess, with a subtle smile that Leonardo's brush alone could render.

"Fools can sometimes love," said the Marquise.

"Yes; but not even fools are simple enough to believe this," pointed out the Princess.

"You are right," the Marquise said, laughing. "We ought not to look to a fool or a man of talent for the solution of the problem. There is nothing for it but genius. In genius alone do you find a child's trustfulness, the religion of love, and a willingness to be blindfolded. Look at Canalis

and the Duchesse de Chaulieu. If you and I ever came across men of genius, they were too remote from our lives, and too busy; we were too frivolous, too much carried away and taken up with other things."

"Ah! and yet I should not like to leave this world without knowing the joy of love to the full," exclaimed the Princess.

"It is nothing to inspire love," said Mme. d'Espard; "it is a question of feeling it. I see many women that are only pegs on which to hang a passion, and not at once its cause and effect."

"The last passion that I inspired was something sacred and noble," said the Princess; "a future lay before it. Chance, for this once, sent me the man of genius, our due; the due so difficult to come by, for there are more pretty women than men of genius. But the Devil was in it."

"Do tell me about it, dear; this is quite new to me."

"I only discovered his romantic passion in the winter of 1829. Every Friday at the Opéra I used to see a man of thirty or thereabouts sitting in the same place in the orchestra; he used to look at me with eyes of fire, saddened at times by the thought of the distance between us and the impossibility of success."

"Poor fellow, we grow very stupid when we are in love," said the Marquise. The Princess smiled at the friendly epigram.

"He used to slip out into the corridor between the acts," she went on. "Once or twice, to see me or to be seen, he pressed his face against the pane of glass in the next box. If people came to my box, I used to see him glued in the doorway to steal a glance. He knew everyone in my set by sight at last. He used to follow them to my box, for the sake of having the door left ajar. Poor fellow, he must have found out who I was very soon, for he knew M. de Maufrigneuse and my father-in-law by sight. Afterwards I used to see my mysterious stranger at the Italiens, sitting in a stall just opposite, so that he could look up at me in unfeigned ecstasy. It was pretty to see it. After the Opéra or the Bouffons, I used to see him planted on his two feet

in the crush. People elbowed him, he stood firm. The light died out of his eyes when he saw me leaning on the arm of someone in favor. As for anything else, not a word, not a letter, not a sign. This was in good taste, you must admit. Sometimes in the morning, when I came back to my house, I would find him again, sitting on a stone by the gateway. This love-stricken man had very fine eyes, a long, thick, fan-shaped beard, a royale, and a mustache and whiskers; you could see nothing of his face but the pale skin over the cheek-bones and a noble forehead. It was a truly antique head.

"The Prince, as you know," she continued, "defended the Tuileries on the side of the Quais in July. He came to Saint-Cloud the evening that all was lost. 'I was all but killed, dear, at four o'clock,' he said. 'One of the insurgents had leveled his gun at me, when the leader of the attack, a young man with a long beard, whom I have seen at the Italiens, I think, struck down the barrel.' The shot hit somebody else, a quartermaster, I believe, two paces away from my husband. So it was plain that the young fellow was a Republican.

"In 1831 when I came to live here I saw him leaning against the house-wall. He seemed to rejoice over my calamities; perhaps he thought that they brought us nearer together. But I never saw him again after the Saint-Merri affair; he was killed that day. The day before General Lamarque's funeral I walked out with my son, and our Republican went with us, sometimes behind, sometimes in front, from the Madeleine to the Passage des Panoramas where I was going."

"Is that all?" asked the Marquise.

"All," returned the Princess. "Oh yes; the morning after Saint-Merri was taken a boy out of the street came and must speak to me; he gave me a letter written on cheap paper, and signed with the stranger's name."

"Let me see it," said the Marquise.

"No, dear. The love in that man's heart was something so great and sacred that I cannot betray his confidence. It stirs my heart to think of that short terrible letter, and

the dead writer moves me more than any of the living men that I have singled out. He haunts me."

"Tell me his name?"

"Oh, quite a common one—Michel Chrestien."

"You did well to tell me of it," Mme. d'Espard answered quickly; "I have often heard of him. Michel Chrestien was a friend of a well-known writer whom you have already wished to see—that Daniel d'Arthez who comes to my house once or twice in a winter. This Chrestien, who died, as a matter of fact, at Saint-Merri, did not lack friends. I have heard it said that he was one of those great politicians who, like de Marsay, need nothing but a turn of the wheel of chance to be on a sudden all that they ought to be."

"Then it is better that he should be dead," said the Princess, hiding her thoughts beneath a melancholy expression.

"Do you care to meet d'Arthez some evening at my house?" asked the Marquise. "You could talk with him of your ghost."

"Very willingly, dear."

Some days after this conversation, Blondet and Rastignac, knowing d'Arthez, promised Mme. d'Espard that he should dine with her. The promise would scarcely have been prudent if the Princess's name had not been mentioned, but the great man of letters could not be indifferent to the opportunity of an introduction to her.

Daniel d'Arthez is one of the very few men of our day who combine great gifts with a great nature. He had at this time won, not all the popularity that his work deserved, but a respectful esteem to which the chosen few could add nothing. His reputation certainly would increase, but in the eyes of connoisseurs he had practically reached his full development. Some writers find their true level soon or late, and once for all, and d'Arthez was one of them. Poor, and of good family, he had rightly guessed the spirit of the age, and trusted not to his ancestor's name, but the name won by himself. For many years he fought his battle in the arena of Paris, to the annoyance of a rich uncle, who left the obscure writer to languish in the direst poverty. Afterwards,

when his nephew became famous, he left him all his money, a piece of inconsistency to be laid to the score of vanity. The sudden transition from poverty to wealth made no change whatever in Daniel d'Arthez's way of life. He continued his work with simplicity worthy of ancient times, and laid new burdens upon himself by accepting a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, on the benches to the Right.

Since his name became known in the world he had occasionally gone into society. An old friend of his, the great doctor Horace Bianchon, had introduced him to the Baron de Rastignac, an under-secretary of state, and a friend of de Marsay's. These were the two politicians who nobly enough gave Michel Chrestien's friends permission to look for his dead body in the cloisters of Saint-Merri, and to bury the Republican with due honors. Gratitude for a service which contrasted strongly with the rigor used by the administration at a time when party spirit ran so high, formed a bond, as it were, between d'Arthez and Rastignac, a bond which the under-secretary of state and the illustrious minister were too adroit not to turn to account. Several of Michel Chrestien's friends held opposite opinions in politics; these had been won over and attached to the new government. One of them, Léon Giraud, first received the appointment of Master of Requests, and afterwards became a councilor of state.

Daniel d'Arthez's life was entirely devoted to his work. He saw society by glimpses only; it was a sort of dream for him. His house was a convent. He led the life of a Benedictine, with a Benedictine's sober rule, a Benedictine's regularity of occupation. His friends knew that he had always dreaded the accident of a woman's entry into his life, he had studied woman too well not to fear her; and by dint of much study he knew less of his subject, much as your profound tactician is always beaten under unforeseen conditions when scientific axioms will not apply. He turned the face of an experienced observer upon the world while he was still at heart a completely unsophisticated boy. The seeming paradox is quite intelligible to anyone who can appreciate the immense distance set between faculties and sentiments—for

the former proceed from the brain, the latter from the heart. A man may be great, and yet be a villain, and a fool may rise to sublime heights of love. D'Arthez was one of the richly endowed beings in whom a keen brain and a wide range of intellectual gifts have not excluded a capacity for deep and noble feeling. By a rare privilege he was both a doer and a thinker. His private life was noble and pure. Carefully as he had shunned love hitherto, he was learned in love; he knew beforehand how great an ascendency passion would gain over him. But poverty and cold, and the heavy strain of the preparation of the solid groundwork of his brilliant after-achievements, had acted marvelously as a preservative. Then his circumstances grew easier, and he formed a commonplace and utterly incomprehensible connection; the woman certainly was good-looking enough, but without manners or education, and socially his inferior. She was kept carefully out of sight.

Michel Chrestien maintained that men of genius possess the power of transforming the most massive women into sylphs; for them the silliest of the sex have sense and wit, and the peasant-girl is a marquise; the more accomplished the woman, the more (according to Chrestien) she loses in their eyes, because she leaves less to the imagination. He also held that love (a purely physical craving for lower natures) becomes, for the higher, the greatest achievement of the soul of man; the closest and strongest of all ties that bind two human creatures to each other. By way of justifying d'Arthez, he instanced Rafael and the Fornarina. (He might have taken himself as a model in that kind, since he saw an angel in the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.) But d'Arthez's strange fancy was explicable in many ways. Perhaps at the outset he lost all hope of finding a woman to correspond to the exquisite visionary ideal, the fond dream of every intelligent man; perhaps his heart was too fastidiously sensitive, too delicate to surrender to a woman of the world; perhaps he preferred to do as nature bade while keeping his illusions and cultivating his ideal; or had he put love far from him as something incompatible with work, with the regularity of a cloistered life, in which passion might have worked confusion?

For some months past Blondet and Rastignac had rallied him on this score, reproaching him with knowing nothing of the world nor of women. To hear them talk, his works were numerous enough and advanced enough to permit of some diversion; he had a fine fortune, yet he lived like a student; he had had no pleasure from his fame or his wealth; he knew nothing of the exquisite delights of the noble and delicate passion that a high-born, high-bred woman can inspire and feel. Was it not unworthy in him to know love only in its gross material aspects? Love reduced to the thing that nature made it was, in their eyes, the most besotted folly. It was the glory of civilization that it had created Woman, when nature stopped short at the female; nature cared for nothing but the perpetuation of the species, whereas civilization invented the perpetuation of desire; and, in short, discovered love, the fairest of man's religions. D'Arthez knew nothing of charming subtleties of language; nothing of proofs of affection continually given by the brain and soul; nothing of desire ennobled by expression; nothing of the divine form that a high-bred woman lends to the grossest materialism. D'Arthez might know women, but he knew nothing of the divinity. A prodigious deal of art, a fair presentment of body and soul, was indispensable in a woman, if love was worthy to be called love. In short, the tempters vaunted that delicious corruption of the imagination which constitutes a Parisienne's coquetry; they pitied d'Arthez because he lived on plain and wholesome fare, and had not tasted luxuries prepared with the Parisienne's skill in these high culinary arts, and whetted his curiosity. At length Dr. Bianchon, recipient of d'Arthez's confidences, knew that this curiosity was aroused. The connection formed by the great man of letters with a commonplace woman, far from growing more agreeable with use and wont, had become intolerable to him; but the excessive shyness that seizes upon solitary men was holding him back.

"What?" said Rastignac, "when a man bears per bend *gules* and *or*, a besant and a torteau counterchanged, why does he not allow the old Picard scutcheon to shine on his carriage? You have thirty thousand livres a year and all

that you make by your pen; you have made good your motto —Ars thes*aurusque virtus*, an old punning device such as our ancestors loved—yet you will not air it in the Bois de Boulogne! Good qualities ought not to hide themselves in this age."

"If you read your work over to that fat Laforêt-like creature who solaces your existence, I would forgive you for keeping her," put in Blondet. "But, my dear fellow, if you live on dry bread, materially speaking, mentally you have not so much as a crust."

These friendly skirmishes between Daniel and his friends had been going on for some months before Mme. d'Espard asked Rastignac and Blondet to induce d'Arthez to dine with her, saying as she did so that the Princesse de Cadignan was extremely anxious to make the famous writer's acquaintance. There are women for whom curiosities of this kind have all the attraction that magic-lantern pictures possess for children; but the pleasure for the eyes is poor enough at the best, and fraught with disenchantment. The more interesting a clever man seems at a distance, the less he answers expectations on a nearer view; the more brilliant he was imagined to be, the duller the figure that he subsequently cuts. And it may be added, parenthetically, that disappointed curiosity is apt to be unjust. D'Arthez was not to be deluded by Rastignac or Blondet, but they told him laughingly that here was a most alluring opportunity of rubbing the rust off his heart, of discovering something of the supreme felicity to be gained through the love of a Parisian great lady. The Princess was positively smitten with him; there was nothing to fear; he had everything to gain from the interview; he could not possibly descend from the pedestal on which Mme. de Cadignan had placed him. Neither Blondet nor Rastignac saw any harm in crediting the Princess with this love-affair; her past had furnished so many anecdotes that she could surely bear the weight of the slander. For d'Arthez's benefit, they proceeded to relate the adventures of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. Beginning with Her Grace's first flirtations with de Marsay, they told

of her subsequent escapades with d'Ajuda-Pinto (whom she took from his wife, and so avenged Mme. de Beauséant); and of her third liaison with young d'Esgrignon, who went with her to Italy, and got himself into an ugly scrape on her account. Then they told how wretched a certain well-known ambassador had made her; how happy she had been with a Russian general; how she had acted since then as Egeria to two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and so forth, and so forth. D'Arthez told them that he had heard more about her than they could tell him; their poor friend Michel Chrestien had worshiped her in his secret heart for four years, and all but lost his wits for her.

"I often used to go with him to the Italiens or the Opéra," Daniel said. "He and I used to rush along the streets to keep up with her horses, while he gazed at the Princess through the windows of her brougham. The Prince de Cadignan owed his life to that love affair; a street boy was going to fire at him when Michel stopped him."

"Well, well, you will find a subject ready made," smiled Blondet. "Just the woman you want; she will only be cruel through delicacy; she will initiate you into the mysteries of refined luxury in the most gracious way; but take care! She has run through many a fortune. The fair Diane is a spendthrift of the order that costs not a centime, but for whom men spend millions. Give yourself body and soul if you will, but keep a hold of your purse, like the old man in Girodet's picture of the *Deluge*."

This conversation invested the Princess with the grace of a queen, the corruption of a diplomatist, the mystery of an initiation, the depth of an abyss, and the danger of a siren. D'Arthez's ingenious friends, being quite unable to foresee the results of their hoax, ended by making Diane d'Uxelles the most portentous Parisienne, the cleverest coquette, the most bewildering courtesan in the world. They were right; and yet the woman so lightly spoken of was sacred and divine for d'Arthez. There was no need to work upon his curiosity. He agreed to meet her at the first asking, and that was all his friends wanted of him.

Mme. d'Espard went to the Princess as soon as the invitation was accepted.

"Do you feel that you are in good looks and good form for coquetry, dear?" she asked. "Come and dine with me in a few days' time, and I will serve you up d'Arthez. Our man of genius is the shyest of the shy; he is afraid of women; he has never been in love. Here is a subject for you. He is extremely clever, and so simple that he disarms suspicion and puts you at a disadvantage. His perspicacity is altogether of the retrospective kind; it acts after the event, and throws out all your calculations. You may take him in to-day; to-morrow he is not to be duped by anything."

"Ah! if I were only thirty years old, I would have some fun," said the Princess. "The one thing wanting in my life hitherto has been a man of genius to outwit. I have always had partners, never an adversary. Love was a game, not a contest."

"Admit that I am very generous, dear Princess; for, after all, well-regulated charity——"

The women looked laughingly into each other's faces, and their hands met with a friendly pressure. Surely both of them must have been in possession of important secrets! They certainly did not take account of a man or a service to render; and any sincere and lasting friendship between two women is sure to be cemented by petty crimes. You may see two of these dear friends, each of them quite able to kill the other with the poisoned dagger in her hand; and a touching picture of harmony they present—till the moment comes when one of them chances to let her weapon drop.

In a week's time, therefore, the Marquise gave one of her small evening parties, her *petits jours*, when a few intimate friends were invited by word of mouth, and the hostess shut her door to other visitors. Five people were asked to dinner: Émile Blondet and Mme. de Montcornet, Daniel d'Arthez, Rastignac, and the Princesse de Cadignan—three men and, including the mistress of the house, three women. Never did chance permit of more skillful prearrangement than on

this occasion of d'Arthez's introduction to Mme. de Cadignan.

Even at this day the Princess is supposed to be one of the best-dressed women in Paris, and for women dress is the first of arts. She wore a blue velvet gown with large white hanging sleeves. The corselet bodice was cut low at the throat; but a sort of chemisette of slightly drawn tulle with a blue border—such as you may see in some of Rafael's portraits—covered her shoulders, leaving only about four fingers' breadth of her neck quite bare. A few sprays of white heather, cleverly arranged by her maid, adorned the fair, rippling hair for which Diane had been famous. In truth, at this moment she looked scarcely five-and-twenty. Four years of solitude and repose had restored brilliancy to her complexion; and there are moments, surely, when a woman looks more beautiful for the desire to please; the will counts for something in the changes that pass over a face. If persons of sanguine or melancholic temperament turn sallow, and the lymphatic grow livid under the influence of violent emotion, surely it must be conceded that desire and hope and joy are great beautifiers of the complexion; they glow in brilliant light from the eyes, kindling beauty in a face with a fresh brightness like that of a sunny morning. The white fairness for which the Princess was so famous had taken on the rich coloring of mature and majestic womanhood. At this period of her life, reflection and serious thought had left their impression upon her; the dreamy, very noble forehead seemed wonderfully in harmony with the slow, queenly gaze of her blue eyes. No physiognomist, however skilled, could have imagined that calculation and decision lay beneath those preternaturally delicate features. Some women's faces baffle science by their repose and fineness, and leave observation at fault; the opportunity of studying them while the passions speak is hard to come by; when the passions have spoken it is too late; by that time a woman is old, she does not care to dissimulate.

The Princess was just such an inscrutable feminine mystery. Whatever she chose to be she could be. She was playful, childlike, distractingly innocent; or subtle, serious,

and disquietingly profound. When she came to the Marquise's, she meant to be a simple, sweet woman, who had known life only by its deceptions; a soulful, much-slandered, but resigned victim, a cruelly-used angel, in short.

She came early, so as to take her place beside Mme. d'Espard on the settee by the fireside. She would be seen as she meant to be seen; she would arrange her attitude with an art concealed by an exquisite ease; her pose should be of the elaborated and studied kind which brings out all the beauty of the curving line that begins at the foot, rises gracefully to the hips, and continues through wonderful sinuous contours to the shoulder, outlining the whole length of the body. Nudity would be less dangerous than draperies so artfully arranged to cover and reveal every line. With a subtlety beyond the reach of many women, Diane had brought her son with her. For a moment Mme. d'Espard beheld the Duc de Maufrigneuse with blank amazement, then her eyes showed that she comprehended the situation. She grasped the Princess's hand with, "I understand! D'Arthez is to be made to accept all the difficulties at the outset, so that you will have nothing to overcome afterwards."

The Comtesse de Montcornet came with Blondet, Rastignac brought d'Arthez. The Princess paid the great man none of the compliments with which ordinary people are lavish on such occasions; but in her advances there was a certain graciousness and deference which could scarcely have been exceeded for anyone. Just so, no doubt, she had been with the King of France and the Princes. She seemed pleased to see the great man of letters, and glad to have sought him out. People of taste (and the Princess's taste was excellent) are known by their manner as listeners; by an unfeigned interest and urbanity, which is to politeness what practice is to good doctrine. Her attentive way of listening when d'Arthez spoke was a thousand times more flattering than the most highly-seasoned compliments. The introduction was made by the Marquise quite simply, and with regard to the dues of either.

At dinner, so far from adopting the affectations which some women permit themselves with regard to food, the

Princess ate with a very good appetite; she made a point of allowing the natural woman to appear without airs of any kind. D'Arthez sat next to her, and between the courses she entered upon a *tête-à-tête* with him under cover of the general conversation.

"My reason for procuring myself the pleasure of a meeting with you, monsieur," she said, "was a wish to hear something of an unfortunate friend of yours who died for a cause other than ours. I lay under great obligations to him, but it was out of my power to acknowledge or to requite his services. The Prince de Cadignan shares my regrets. I have heard that you were one of the poor fellow's most intimate friends, and that disinterested stanch friendship between you gives me a certain claim to your acquaintance; so you will not think it strange that I should wish to hear all that you could tell me of one so dear to you. I am attached to the exiled family, and of course hold monarchical opinions; but I am not of the number of those who think that it is impossible for a Republican to be noble at heart. A monarchy and a republic are the only forms of government which do not stifle nobility of sentiment."

"Michel Chrestien was sublime, madame," Daniel answered with an unsteady voice. "I do not know of a greater man among the heroes of old times. You must not think that he was one of the narrow Republicans who want the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety re-established with its pretty ways. No, Michel used to dream of European Federation on the Swiss model. Set aside the magnificent monarchical system which, in my opinion, is peculiarly suited to our country; and let us admit that Michel's project would mean the abolition of war in the old world, and a Europe constituted afresh on a very different basis from that of ancient conquest, modified subsequently by the feudal system. On this showing the Republicans most nearly approached his theories; and for that reason he fought with them in July and at Saint-Merri. In politics we were diametrically opposed, but none the less we were the closest friends."

"It is the finest possible testimony to both your characters," Mme. Cadignan said timidly.

"During the last four years of his life he told me of his love for you. No one else knew about it," continued d'Arthez. "We had been like brothers; but that confidence bound us to each other even more closely than before. He alone, madame, would have loved you as you deserve to be loved. Many a wetting I have had, as he and I accompanied your carriage home, running to keep up with the horses, so as not to miss a glimpse of your face—to admire you——"

"Why, monsieur, I shall soon be bound to make compensation——"

"Why is not Michel here?" returned Daniel in a melancholy voice.

"Perhaps he might not have loved me for long," began the Princess with a sorrowful shake of the head. "Republicans are even more absolute in their ideas than we Absolutists who sin through indulgence. He would dream of me as a perfect woman no doubt; he would have been cruelly undeceived. We women are persecuted with slander; and, unlike you literary men, we cannot meet calumny and fight it down by our fame and our achievements. People take us, not for the women we are, but simply as others make us out to be. Others would very soon hide the real unknown self that there is in me by holding up a sham portrait of an imaginary woman, the true Mme. de Maufrigneuse in the eyes of the world. He would think me unworthy of the noble love he bore me, he would think I could not understand." Again the Princess shook her head with its coronet of heather among the bright gold curls. There was something sublime in the movement; it expressed sorrowful misgivings and hidden griefs that could not be uttered. Daniel understood all that it meant. He looked at her with quick sympathy in his eyes.

"Still," she said, "when I saw him again one day, a long while after the Revolution of July, I almost gave way to a wish that came over me to grasp him by the hand, then and there before everyone, in the peristyle of the Théâtre

Italien, and to give him my bouquet. And then—I thought that such a demonstration of gratitude would be sure to be misconstrued, like so many generous acts that people call 'Mme. de Maufrigneuse's follies'; it will never be in my power to explain them; nobody save God and my son will ever know me as I really am."

Her murmured words, spoken with an accent worthy of a great actress, in tones so low that no one else could overhear them, must have thrilled any listener. They went to d'Arthez's heart. The famous man of letters was quite out of sight; this was a woman striving to rehabilitate herself for the sake of the dead. Perhaps people had slandered her to him; she wanted to know if anything had tarnished her name for this man who had loved her once. Had he died with all his illusions?

"Michel was one of those men who love wholly and completely," returned d'Arthez; "such as he, if they choose amiss, can suffer, but they can never give up her whom they have chosen."

"Then was I loved like that?" she cried, with a look of high beatitude.

"Yes, madame."

"And he was happy through me?"

"For four years."

"No woman ever hears of such a thing without a feeling of proud satisfaction," she said, and there was a modest confusion in the noble sweet face that turned to his.

One of the cleverest maneuvers known to such actresses is a trick of veiling their manner if words have said too much, or of talking with their eyes when other language falls short. There is an irresistible fascination in these ingenious dissonances that creep into the music of love, or true or feigned.

"To have made a great man happy," she went on (and her voice dropped lower and lower when she had assured herself of the effect that she had produced). "To have made a great man happy, and that without committing a crime—this is the fulfillment of one's destiny, is it not?"

"Did he not write to you?"

"Yes, but I wanted to be quite sure; for, believe me, monsieur, when he set me so high, he was not mistaken in me."

Women have an art of investing their utterances with a certain peculiar sacramental virtue; they can impart an indescribable something to their words, a thrill that gives them a wider significance, a greater depth; and, unless the charmed auditor subsequently takes it into his head to ask himself what those words really meant, the effect is attained—which is the peculiar aim and object of eloquence. If the Princess had worn the crown of France at that moment, instead of the high plaited coronet of bright hair and wreath of delicate heather, her brows could not have looked more queenly. She seemed to d'Arthez to be walking over the tide of slander as our Savior walked over the sea of Galilee; the shroud of her dead love wrapped her round as an aureole clings about an angel. There was not the remotest suggestion that she felt that this was the one position left to her to take up; not a hint of a desire to seem great or loving; it was done simply and quietly. No living man could have done the Princess the service rendered by the dead.

D'Arthez, worker and recluse, had had no experience of the world; study had folded him beneath its sheltering wings. Her words, her tones, found a credulous listener. He had fallen under the spell of her exquisite ways; he was filled with admiration of her flawless beauty, matured by evil fortune, freshened by retirement; he bowed down before that rarest combination—a vivid intellect and a noble soul. He longed, in short, to be Michel Chrestien's heir and successor.

The first beginnings of his love may be traced to an idea—a common case with your profound thinker. While he looked at his neighbor, while his eyes grew familiar with the outlines of her head, the disposition of her delicate features, her shape, her foot, her finely modeled hands; while he saw her now on a closer view than in the days when he accompanied his friend on his wild pursuit of her carriage, he was thinking to himself that here was an instance of that wonderful

thing—the power of second-sight developed in a man under the influence of love's exaltation. How clearly Michel Chrestien had read this woman's heart and soul by the light of the fire of love! And she too on her side had divined the Federalist; he might, no doubt, have been happy! In this way the Princess was invested with a great charm for d'Arthez; a halo as of poetry shone about her.

In the course of the dinner, d'Arthez remembered Michel's confidences, Michel's despair, Michel's hopes when he fancied that he was loved in return, and his passionate, lyrical outpourings to the one friend to whom he spoke of his love. And Daniel the while was all unconscious that he was to reap the benefit of the preparations due to chance. It very seldom happens that a confidant can pass without remorse to the estate of rival; d'Arthez could do this, and wrong no one now. In one brief moment he realized the immense distance that separates the high-bred lady, the flower of the great world, from the ordinary woman, whom, however, he only knew by a single specimen. He had been approached on his weakest side, touched on the tenderest spots in his soul and genius. His simplicity, his impetuous imagination urged him to possess this woman; but he felt that the world held him back, and the Princess's bearing, her majesty, be it said, raised a barrier between him and her. It was something new to him to respect the woman he loved; and this unwonted feeling acted in a manner as an irritant; the physical attraction grew all the more potent because he had swallowed the bait, and must keep his uneasiness to himself.

They talked of Michel Chrestien till dessert was served. It was an excuse for lowering their voices on either side. Love, sympathy, intuition—here was her opportunity of posing as a slandered, unappreciated woman! here was his chance of stepping into the dead Republican's shoes! Possibly a man of such candid mind may have detected within himself certain diminution of regret for the loss of his friend.

But when the dessert shone resplendent on the table; when the light of the candles in the sconces fell upon the rich colors of fruit and sugar-plums among the bouquets

of flowers; then, under shelter of the brilliant screen of blossoms that separated the guests, it pleased the Princess to put an end to the confidences. With a word, a delicious word, accompanied by one of the glances that seem to turn a fair-haired woman into a brunette, she found some subtle way of expressing the idea that Daniel and Michel were twin souls. After this d'Arthez threw himself into the general conversation with boyish spirits, and a slightly fatuous air not unworthy of a youth at school.

The Princess took d'Arthez's arm in the simplest way when they returned to the Marquise's little drawing-room. She lingered a little in the great salon, till the Marquise, on Blondet's arm, was at some little distance from them. Then she stopped d'Arthez.

"It is my wish to be not inaccessible to that poor Republican's friend," she said. "I have made it a rule to receive no visitors, but you shall be the one exception. Do not think of this as a favor. Favors are only possible between strangers, and it seems to me that we are old friends. I wish to look on you as Michel's brother."

D'Arthez could only reply by a pressure of the arm; he found nothing to say.

Coffee was served. Diane de Cadignan wrapped herself in a large shawl with coquettish grace, and rose to go. Blondet and Rastignac knew too much of the world and of courtiers' tact to try to detain her or to make any ill-bred outcry; but Mme. d'Espard, taking the Princess by the hand, induced her to sit down again.

"Wait till the servants have dined," she whispered; "the carriage is not ready."

She made a sign to the footman who carried out the coffee tray. Mme. de Montcornet, guessing that Mme. d'Espard wished to speak with the Princess, drew off d'Arthez, Rastignac, and Blondet by one of those wild paradoxical tirades which Parisiennes understand to admiration.

"Well?" asked the Marquise. "What do you think of him?"

"He is simply an adorable child; he is scarcely out of

swaddling clothes, Really, even this time there will be a victory without a struggle, as usual."

"It is disheartening," said Mme. d'Espard, "but there is one thing left."

"And that is?"

"Let me be your rival."

"That is as you shall decide. I have made up my mind what to do. Genius is a kind of cerebral existence; I do not know how to reach its heart. We will talk of this later on."

After that last enigmatic remark, Mme. d'Espard made a plunge into the conversation. Apparently she was neither hurt by the words, "That is as you shall decide," nor curious to know what might come of the interview. The Princess stayed nearly an hour longer on the settee by the fireside. She sat in a listless, careless attitude, like Dido in Guérin's picture; and while she seemed to be absorbed in listening, she glanced now and again at Daniel with undisguised yet well-controlled admiration. The carriage was announced. She grasped the Marquise d'Espard's hand, bowed to Mme. de Montcornet, and vanished.

The Princess's name was not mentioned in the course of the evening. The rest of the party, however, reaped the benefit of d'Arthez's uplifted mood; he talked his best; and, indeed, in Rastignac and Blondet he had two supporters of the first rank as regards quickness of intellect and mental grasp, while the two women had long since been counted among the wittiest great ladies in Paris. To them that evening was like a halt at an oasis; it was a rare enjoyment keenly appreciated by the quartette, who lived in constant dread of the danger signals of society, politics, or drawing-room cliques. Some people are privileged to shine like beneficent stars upon others, giving light to their minds and warmth to their hearts. D'Arthez's was one of these finer natures. A man of letters, if he rises to the height of his position, is accustomed to think without restraint, and apt, in society, to forget that everything must not be said; still, as there is almost always a certain originality about his divagations, no one complains of them. It was this savor

of originality, so rare in mere cleverness, this simple-minded freshness, that made d'Arthez's character something nobly apart; and in this lay the secret of that delightful evening. D'Arthez came away with the Baron de Rastignac. As they drove home, the latter naturally spoke of the Princess, and asked him what he thought of her.

"No wonder Michel loved her," returned d'Arthez; "she is no ordinary woman."

"A very extraordinary woman," Rastignac returned dryly. "I can tell by the sound of your voice that you are in love with her already. You will call before three days are out; and I am too old a hand in Paris not to know what will pass between you. So, my dear Daniel, I beg you not to fall into any 'confusion of interests.' Love the Princess by all means if you feel that you can love her, but bear your interests in mind. She has never asked or taken two farthings of any man whatsoever; she is far too much a Cadignan or d'Uxelles for that; but to my certain knowledge she has not only squandered a very considerable fortune of her own, she has made others run through millions of francs? How? why? and wherefore? Nobody can tell. She does not know herself. Thirteen years ago I saw her swallow down a charming young fellow's property and an old notary's savings to boot in twenty months."

"Thirteen years ago!" exclaimed d'Arthez; "then how old is she?"

"Why, did you not see her son?" Rastignac retorted, laughing. "That was her son at table—the Duc de Maufrigneuse, a young fellow of nineteen. And nineteen and seventeen make——"

"Thirty-six!" exclaimed the man of letters in amazement; "I took her for twenty."

"She will be quite willing; but you need have no uneasiness on that score, she will never be more than twenty for you. You are setting foot in the most fantastic of worlds.—Good-night. Here you are at home," added Rastignac, as the carriage turned into the Rue de Bellefond, where d'Arthez lived in a neat house of his own. "We shall meet at Mlle. des Touches' in the course of the week."

D'Arthez allowed love to invade his heart after the fashion of my Uncle Toby, *videlicet*, without the least attempt at resistance. He proceeded at once to uncritical adoration, admiring the one woman and excluding all others. The Princess, one of the most remarkable portents in Paris, where everything good or evil is possible—the Princess, fair creature, became for him the "angel of his dreams," hackneyed though the expression may be, now that it has fallen on evil days. A full comprehension of the sudden transformation wrought in the illustrious man of letters is impossible, unless you remember how solitude and continual work leave the heart dormant, and how painful a connection with a vulgar woman may become, when physical cravings give place to love, and love develops new desires and fancies and regrets, and calls forth the diviner impulses of the highest regions of a man's nature. D'Arthez was, indeed, the child, the schoolboy that the Princess at once discerned him to be.

And the beautiful Diane herself received an almost similar illumination. At last she had found a man above other men, the man whom all women desire to find, even if they only mean to play with him; the power that they consent to obey for the sake of gaining control of it. At last she had discovered a great intellect, combined with a boy's heart, and this in the first dawn of passion; and she saw, with happiness undreamed of, that all this wealth was contained in a form that pleased her.

D'Arthez was handsome, she thought. Perhaps he was. He had reached the sober age of maturity; he had led a quiet, regular life that had preserved a certain bloom of youth through his thirty-eight years; and, like statesmen and men of sedentary life generally, had attained a reasonable degree of stoutness. As a very young man he bore a vague resemblance to the portraits of the young Bonaparte; and the likeness was still as strong as it might be between a dark-eyed man with thick brown hair and the Emperor with his blue eyes and chestnut locks. But all the high and burning ambition that once shone in d'Arthez's eyes had been softened, as it were, by success; the thoughts that lay

dormant beneath the lad's forehead had blossomed; the hollows in his face had filled up. Prosperity had mellowed the sallow tints that once told of a penurious life and faculties braced to bear the strain of incessant and exhausting toil.

If you look carefully at the finest faces among ancient philosophers, you can always find that those deviations from the perfect type which give to each face a character of its own are rectified by the habit of meditation, and the continual repose demanded by the intellectual life. The most crabbed visage among them—that of Socrates, for instance—acquires a well-nigh divine serenity at last. In the noble simplicity that became d'Arthez's imperial face very well, there was something guileless, something of a child's unconsciousness of itself, and a kindliness that went to the hearts of others. He had none of that politeness in which there is always a tinge of insincerity, none of the art by which the best-bred and most amiable people can assume those qualities which they have not, much to the discomfiture of their late enlightened dupes. Some sins of omission he might make as a consequence of his isolation; but he never jarred upon others, and a perfume of the wilderness only enhances the gracious urbanity of the great man who lays aside his greatness to descend to the social level, and, like Henry IV., will either lend a hand in children's games or lend his wit to fools.

If d'Arthez made no attempt at a defense, the Princess, on her return home, did not open the question again with herself. There was no more to be said, so far as she was concerned; with all her knowledge, and all her ignorance, she loved. She only asked herself if she deserved such great happiness—what had she done that Heaven should send such an angel to her? She would be worthy of this love; it should last; it should be hers forever; the last years of youth and waning beauty should be sweet in the paradise that she saw by glimpses. As for resisting it, as for haggling over herself, or coquetting with her lover, she did not even think of it. Her thoughts were of something quite different. She understood the greatness of genius; she felt

instinctively that genius is not apt to apply the ordinary rules to a woman of a thousand. So after a rapid forecast, such as none but great feminine natures can make, she vowed to herself to surrender at the first summons. Her estimate of d'Arthez's character, based on a single interview, led her to suspect that there would be time to make what she wished of herself, to be what she meant to be in the eyes of this sublime lover, before that summons would be made.

And herewith begins an obscure comedy, played on the stage of the inner consciousness of a man and woman, each to be duped by the other. *Tartuffe* is the merest trifle compared with such inscrutable comedies as this; they enlarge the borders of the depravity of human nature; they lie beyond the domain of dramatic art. Extraordinary as they are throughout, they are natural, conceivable, justified by necessity. Such a comedy is a horrible kind of drama, which should be entitled the seamy side of vice.

The Princess began by sending for d'Arthez's books. She had not read a single word of them, but nevertheless she had kept up a flattering conversation on the subject for twenty minutes without making a single slip. She proceeded to read them through, and then tried to compare his work with that of the best contemporary writers. The result was a fit of mental indigestion on the day of d'Arthez's visit. Every day that week she had dressed with unusual care; her toilet expressed an idea for the eyes to accept, without knowing how or wherefore. So she appeared in a combination of soft shades of gray; a listless, graceful, half-mourning, an appropriate costume for a woman who felt weary of life, and had nothing left to bind her to life save a few natural ties (her son perhaps). Hers, apparently, was an elegant disgust that stopped short, however, of suicide; she was finishing her allotted time in the earthly prison house.

She received d'Arthez as though she expected his visit, and had seen him at her house a hundred times, doing him the honor of treating him as an old acquaintance. The conversation began in the most commonplace way. They talked of the weather, of the Cabinet, of de Marsay's bad health, of the

hopes of the Legitimist party. D'Arthez was an Absolutist. The Princess could not but know the opinions of a man who sat among the fifteen or twenty Legitimist members of the Chamber of Deputies; so she took occasion to tell the story of the trick she had played de Marsay; she touched on the Prince's devotion to the Royal family and to Madame; and thence, by an easy transition, brought d'Arthez's attention to the Prince de Cadignan.

"There is this at least to be said for him, he is an attached and devoted servant of His Majesty," said she. "His public character consoles me for all that I have suffered from his private life. But," she continued, adroitly leaving the Prince on one side, "have you not noticed (for nothing escapes you) that men have two sides to their characters? One side they show at home, to their wives; it is their true character that appears in private life; the mask is taken off, dissimulation is at an end; they do not trouble to seem other than they are; they are themselves—often they are horrible. They are great, noble, and generous for the rest of the world, for the King, and the Court, and the salons; they wear a costume embroidered with virtues and bedizened with fine language; they possess exquisite qualities in abundance. What a shocking farce it is! And yet there are people that wonder at the smile some women wear, at their air of superiority over their husbands, their indifference——"

She broke off, but allowed her hand to drop till it rested on the arm of her chair, a gesture that rounded off her discourse to admiration. D'Arthez's eyes were intent upon her lissom figure, upon the lines so gracefully curved against the silken depths of her easy-chair; upon the movements of her dress; upon a certain fascinating little wrinkle that played up and down over her bust, a daring device which only suits a waist so slender that it has nothing to lose by it. The Princess, watching him, took up the order of her thoughts, as though she were speaking to herself.

"I will say no more," she said. "For as for women that give themselves out for 'misunderstood,' and victims of ill-assorted unions who take themselves dramatically and pose as interesting persons—that kind of thing seems to me hopelessly

vulgar, and you authors have ended by making such women very ridiculous. One must either submit, and there is no more to be said, or one resists and finds amusement. In either case a woman should keep silence. It is true that I could not make up my mind to do either, but that is so much the more reason, perhaps, for keeping silence now. How silly it is to complain! If a woman is not equal to the circumstances, if she fails in tact, or sense, or subtlety, she deserves her fate. Are not women queens in France? They play with you when they choose, as they choose, and for as long as they choose."

She swung her scent-bottle, with a marvelous blending of feminine insolence and mocking gayety in her gesture.

"I have often heard contemptible little creatures regret that they were women," she continued; "and I always felt sorry for them. If I had the choice, I would be a woman over again. Ah! the pleasure and pride of owing your triumphs to strength, to all the power put in your hands by laws of your own framing! And when we see you at our feet, doing and saying foolish things for our sakes, is it not intoxicating joy to feel that the woman's weakness triumphs? So, when we succeed, we are bound to keep silence under penalty of losing our ascendency. And after a defeat, a woman's pride bids her be silent. The slave's silence dismays the master."

While this prattle was piped forth in those winning tones of gentle derision, with an accompaniment of little dainty turns of the head, d'Arthez was spellbound, just as a partridge is fascinated by the sportsman's dog. This kind of woman was something quite new in his experience.

"Tell me, madame, I beg of you, how any man could have made you suffer; be sure that where other women would be vulgar, you would be distinguished, even if you had not a manner of saying things that would make a cookery-book interesting."

"You are going far in friendship," she said, so gravely that d'Arthez grew serious and uneasy.

She changed the subject. It grew late. The man of genius, poor fellow, went away in a contrite frame of mind; he had seemed inquisitive; he had hurt her feelings; and

he was convinced that she had suffered as few women suffer. Diane had spent her life in amusing herself; she was neither more nor less than a feminine Don Juan, with this difference—if she had tempted the stone statue it would not have been with an invitation to supper, and she certainly would not have had the worst of the encounter.

It is impossible to continue this history without a word as to the Prince de Cadignan (better known as the Duc de Maufrigneuse), or the whole salt and savor of the Princess's miraculous inventions will be lost upon the reader. An outsider could never understand the atrocity of the comedy which the lady has been playing for the benefit of a man of letters. In person M. le Duc de Maufrigneuse, like his father the Prince de Cadignan, was tall and spare; he was a complete fine gentleman, his urbanity never deserted him; he made charming speeches; he became a colonel by the grace of God, and a good soldier by accident. In other respects the Prince was as brave as a Pole, showed his valor on all occasions without discrimination, and used the jargon of Court circles to hide his mental vacuity. Ever since he attained the age of thirty-six he had been perforce as indifferent to the sex as his royal master King Charles X.; for, like his master, he had found too much favor with the fair in his youth, and now was paying the penalty. He had been the idol of the Faubourg Saint-Germain for eighteen years, during which time he led the dissipated, pleasure-filled life of an eldest son.

The Revolution had ruined his father; and though after the Restoration the late Prince had recovered his post, the governorship of a royal castle, with a salary and divers pensions, he had kept up the state of a *grand seigneur* of old days, and squandered his fortune during the brief gleam of prosperity to such purpose, that all the sums repaid him by the law of indemnity went in a display of luxury in his immense old mansion. It was the only piece of property left to him, and the greater part of it was occupied by his daughter-in-law. The old Prince de Cadignan died at the ripe age of eighty-seven, some years before the Revolution of July. He had ruined his wife, and for a

long time there had been something like a coolness between him and his son-in-law, the Duc de Navarreins; the Duke's first wife had been a Cadignan, and the accounts of the trust of her fortune had never been satisfactorily settled.

The present Prince (then the Duc de Maufrigneuse) had had a liaison with the Duchesse d'Uxelles. Towards 1814, when the Duke reached his thirty-sixth year, the Duchess, seeing that he was poor but stood very well at Court, gave him her daughter with a rent-roll of fifty or sixty thousand livres, to say nothing of expectations. In this way Mlle. d'Uxelles became a duchess, her mother knowing that in all probability the newly married wife would be allowed great liberty. An heir was born, after which unexpected piece of good fortune the Duke left his wife complete freedom of action, amused himself by going from garrison to garrison, spent the winters in Paris, contracted debts which his father paid, and professed the most complete indifference for his wife. He always gave the Duchess a week's warning before returning to Paris. Adored by his regiment, in high favor with the Dauphin, an adroit courtier, and something of a gambler, there was no sort of affectation about the Duc de Maufrigneuse; the Duchess never could persuade him to take up an Opéra girl, out of regard for appearances and consideration for her, as she pleasantly said. The Duke succeeded to his father's post at Court, and contrived to please both Louis XVIII. and Charles X., which shows that he understood how to turn a colorless character to a tolerably good account; and besides, his life and behavior were covered over by the most elegant veneer. In language and fine manners he was a perfect model; he was popular even among Liberals. The Cadignans, according to the Prince his father, were famous for ruining their wives; in this respect, however, he found it impossible to keep up the family tradition, the Duchess was running through her fortune too quickly for him.

These little details of the family history were public property at Court and in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; so much so, in fact, that if anyone had begun to discuss them, he would have been met with a smile. A man might as well

have announced the capture of Holland by the Dutch. No woman ever mentioned the "charming duke" without a word of praise. His conduct towards his wife had been perfect; it was not a small thing for a man to behave himself as well as Maufrigneuse had done, he had left the Duchess's fortune entirely at her disposal; he had given her his support and countenance on every occasion. And indeed, from pride, or good nature, or from some chivalrous feeling, M. de Maufrigneuse had many a time come to the Duchess's rescue; any other woman would have gone under, in spite of her connections, in spite of the combined credit of the old Duchesse d'Uxelles, the Duc de Navarreins, the old Prince de Cadignan, and her husband's aunt. The present Prince is allowed to be one of the true nobles among the noblesse. And perhaps, if a courtier is faithful at need, he has won the finest of all victories over himself.

The Duchesse d'Uxelles was a woman of five-and-forty when she married her daughter to the Duc de Maufrigneuse, and therefore she saw her old friend's success not merely without jealousy, but with interest. At the time of the marriage she had showed herself a great lady and saved the situation; though she could not prevent scoffing on the part of spiteful persons at Court, who said that the Duchess's noble conduct cost her no great effort, albeit she had given the past five years to repentance and devotion, after the manner of women who stand in great need of forgiveness.

To return to Diane de Cadignan. The extent of the knowledge of literature which she displayed grew more and more remarkable day by day. She could venture with the utmost boldness upon the most abstruse questions, thanks to studies daily and nightly pursued with an intrepidity worthy of all praise. D'Arthez was bewildered. He was incapable of suspecting that Diane, like a good many writers, repeated at night what she read of a morning. He took her for a woman of no ordinary power. In the course of these conversations they wandered further and further from the end that Diane had in view; she tried to return to the

ground of confidential talk, but it was not very easy to bring a man of d'Arthez's temper back to a subject after he had once been warned from it. However, after a month of excursions into literature and beautiful Platonic discourses, d'Arthez grew bolder, and came every day at three o'clock. At six he took leave, only to return three hours later to stay till midnight or one o'clock in the morning. This with the regularity of an impatient lover; and the Princess, on her side, was always more or less carefully dressed at his hours. The tryst thus kept daily, the pains that they both took with themselves, their whole proceedings, in fact, expressed the feelings to which neither of them dared to confess; and the Princess divined in some marvelous way that the grown child dreaded the coming contest as much as she herself longed for it. And yet d'Arthez's manner was a constant declaration of love—a declaration made with a respect which was inexpressibly pleasant to the Princess. Every day they felt so much the more closely drawn together, because there was no convention, no sharp line of difference to arrest the progress of their ideas; no barrier was raised, as frequently happens between lovers, by formal demands on the one side, and coquettish or sincere demurs upon the other. Like most men whose youth lasts on into middle age, d'Arthez was consumed by a poignant irresolution caused by vehement desires on the one hand, and the dread of incurring his mistress's displeasure on the other. A young woman understands nothing of all this while she shares the emotion, but the Princess was too experienced not to linger over its delights. So Diane enjoyed to the full the delicious child's-play of love, finding all the more charm in it because she knew so well how to put an end to it. She was like a great artist, dwelling complacently on the vague outlines of a sketch, sure of the coming hour of inspiration that shall shape a masterpiece out of an idea that floats as yet in the limbo of things unborn. How many a time, as she saw that d'Arthez was ready to advance, she amused herself by checking him with her queenly air. She could control the tempest in the man's boyish heart, she could raise the storm and still it again, by a glance, by

giving him her hand to kiss, by some commonplace word uttered in a soft, tremulous voice.

This policy of hers had been coolly resolved upon, and she acted it out divinely, gradually deepening the lines of the image engraven upon the heart of a clever man of letters of whom it pleased her to make a child. With her he was trustful, open, almost simple; and yet at times something like a reaction would set in, and she could not but admire the man's greatness, blended with such innocence. The arch-coquette's play was binding her at unawares to her bond-slave. At length Diane grew impatient with her love-sick Epictetus; and as soon as she felt that he was disposed to put a blind faith in her, she set herself to tie a thick bandage over his eyes.

One evening Daniel found the Princess in a pensive mood. She was sitting with one elbow on the table, her bright golden head bathed in the lamplight, while she played with a letter, absently tapping it upon the tablecloth. When d'Arthez had been allowed a full view of the letter, she folded it and thrust it into her belt.

"What is the matter?" asked d'Arthez. "You look troubled."

"I have heard from M. de Cadignan," she replied. "Deeply as he has wronged me, I have been thinking, since I read this letter, that he is an exile, and alone; he is fond of his son, and his son is away from him."

Her soul seemed to vibrate through her voice; to d'Arthez it was a revelation of a divine sensitiveness to another's pain. It touched him to the quick. His lover's eagerness to read her became, as it were, a piece of curious literary and scientific inquiry. If he could only know the height of her woman's greatness; the full extent of the injuries forgiven; and learn how near the angels a woman of the world may rise while others accuse her of frivolity and selfishness and hardness of heart! Then he remembered that once before he had sought to know this angel's heart, and how he had been repulsed. He took the slender transparent hand with its taper fingers in his, and said, with something like a tremor in his voice, "Are we friends enough now for you

to tell me what you have suffered? Old troubles must count for something in your musings."

"Yes," said the fair Diane, prolonging the one syllable; Tulou's flute never sighed forth a sweeter sound. Then she drifted again into musings, her eyes clouded over; and as Daniel waited in anxious suspense, the solemnity of the moment penetrated his being. His poet's imagination beheld the cloud veiling the sanctuary; slowly the obscurity would clear away, and he should behold the wounded lamb lying at the feet of God.

"Well?" he said softly and quietly.

Diane looked into his face with its look of tender entreaty, then her eyes fell slowly, and the lashes drooped; the movement was a revelation of the noblest delicacy. A man must have been a monster to imagine that there could be a taint of hypocrisy in the graceful curve of the throat, as Diane raised her little dainty head to send a glance into the very depths of those hungry eyes.

"Can I? and ought I?" she began, with a certain hesitation, and her face wore a sublime expression of dreamy tenderness as she gazed at d'Arthez. "Men keep faith so little in such things. They feel so little bound to secrecy."

"Ah! but if you cannot trust me, why am I here?" he cried.

"Ah! my friend, does a woman calculate when she binds herself to a friendship for life?" answered Diane, and there was all the charm of an involuntary confession about her words. "It is not a question of refusing you (what can I refuse to you?); but what would you think of me if I should speak? Willingly I would tell you of my position, a strange one at my age; but what would you think of a wife who should lay bare the wounds dealt to her by her own husband, and betray the secrets of another? Turenne kept his word with thieves; ought I not to show the honor of a Turenne towards those who tortured me?"

"Have you given your word to anyone?"

"M. de Cadignan thought it unnecessary to ask for secrecy. So you would have more of me than myself? Ah! tyrant, am I to bury my honesty in you?" and her glance

made the pretended confidence seem something greater than the gift of her person.

"You rate me rather too low if you can fear any wrong whatsoever from me," he said with ill-disguised bitterness.

"Forgive me, my friend," she said. She took his hand in hers, caressing it with a most loving soft touch of her fingers. "I know all your worth. You have told me the story of your life; it is a noble, a beautiful story; it is sublime, it is worthy of your name; perhaps you think I owe you mine in return? But at this very moment I am afraid of lowering myself in your eyes by telling secrets that are not mine only. And, poet and lonely thinker as you are, perhaps you may not believe in the horrors of worldly life. Oh! when you invent your tragedies, you little know what tragedies are going on in many an apparently closely united family! You do not imagine the extent of the wretchedness beneath the gilding."

"I know all," he cried.

"No, nothing," she answered. "Ought a daughter to betray her mother?"

At those words of hers, d'Arthez felt as if he had lost his way in darkness among the Alps, and found, with the first glimpse of dawn, that he stood on the very edge of a bottomless precipice. He looked with dazed eyes at the Princess, and a cold chill crept over him. For a moment Diane thought that the man of genius was a weakling; but a flash in his eyes reassured her.

"And now, you are almost like a judge for me," she said despairingly. "And I may speak, for every slandered creature has a right to prove its innocence. I have been, nay—if anyone remembers a poor recluse, a woman forced by the world to renounce the world—I am still accused of such light conduct, of so many sins, that I may be forgiven for putting myself in the true light for the heart in which I find a refuge from which I shall not be driven forth. It has always seemed to me that self-justification tells heavily against innocence; for that reason I have always scorned to defend myself; to whom, indeed, could I speak? Painful

things like these can only be confided to God, or to someone very near Him, to a priest or to a second self. Ah, well, if my secrets are not there," she added, laying a hand on d'Arthez's breast, "as they are here" (bending the busk of her corset with her fingers), "you cannot be the great d'Arthez, and I have been mistaken in you."

D'Arthez's eyes filled, and Diane drank in those tears; she gave him a sidelong glance with steady eyes and unquivering eyelids. It was as deft and neat as a cat's spring on a mouse. Then, for the first time, after sixty days of protocols, d'Arthez took the warm, moist hand, carried it to his lips, and set a kiss upon it—a slow, long kiss, drawn from the wrist to the finger-tips, taken with such delicate rapture that the Princess, bending her head, augured very well of literature. In her opinion, men of genius ought to love more perfectly than men of the world, coxcombs, diplomats, or even military men, though these certainly have nothing else to do. Diane had had experience. She knew that a man's character as a lover is revealed by very small signs and tokens. If a woman is learned in this lore, she can tell from a mere gesture what she has to expect; much as Cuvier could examine a fragment of a fossil foot, and say, "This belonged to an animal that lived so many thousand years ago; its habit was amphibious, carnivorous, herbivorous, or what not; it had or had not horns, and so forth." She felt sure that the imagination which d'Arthez put into his literary style would show itself in his love; so she held it expedient to bring him to the highest degree of passion and belief in her. She drew her hand back at once, with a magnificent gesture fraught with emotion. If she had said in words, "No more of that, you will kill me!" she could not have spoken more forcibly. For a moment her eyes rested upon his; joy and fear and prudery and confidence and languor; a vague longing and something of a maiden's shyness were mingled in their expression. For that moment she was a girl of twenty. She had prepared, you may be sure, for that hour's comedy; never had woman dressed herself with such art; and now, as she sat in her great chair, she looked like a flower ready to open out

at the first kiss of the sun. Real or artificial, whichever she was, she intoxicated Daniel.

And here, if it is permissible to hazard a personal opinion, let us confess that it would be delightful to be thus deceived for as long as possible. Talma on the stage certainly rose far above nature many a time; but is not the Princesse de Cadignan the greatest actress of our day? Nothing was wanting to her save an attentive audience. But, unfortunately, women disappear in stormy epochs; they are like water-lilies, they must have a cloudless sky and the softest of warm breezes if they are to blossom and spread themselves before our enchanted eyes.

The hour had come. Diane was about to entangle a great man in the inextricable toils of a romance that had long been growing; and he was to listen to it as a catechumen might have listened to an epistle from one of the apostles in the palmy days of the Christian Church.

"My mother, who is still living at Uxelles, married me in 1814 to M. de Maufrigneuse when I was seventeen years old (you see, my friend, how old I am). She made the match, not out of love for me, but from love of *him*. He was the only man she had ever cared for; so she repaid him in this way for all the happiness that he had given her. Oh! do not be shocked by the ugly combination; it is a thing that often happens. Some women put their lover before their children, just as most women are mothers rather than wives. The two instincts of wifely love and motherhood, developed as they are by social conditions, often come into conflict in a woman's heart. One of them must necessarily supplant the other, unless both kinds of love are equally strong, as sometimes happens with an extraordinary woman, the glory of our sex. A man of your genius surely will understand these things; fools wonder at them, yet they are none the less founded in nature. I will go further, they are justifiable by differences in character, temperament, situation, and the nature of the attachment. If I myself, for instance, at this moment,—after twenty years of misfortune, and disappointment, and heavy trials, and hollow pleasures, and slander which I could not refute—if I were

offered a true and lasting love, might I not feel ready to fling myself at the feet of the man who offered it? If I did, would not the world condemn me? And yet, surely twenty years of wretchedness ought to buy absolution for twelve years given to a pure and hallowed love—the twelve years of life that remain before I fade? But it will not be; I am not foolish enough to diminish my merits in the eyes of God. I have borne the burden and heat of the day until evening; I will finish my day; I shall have earned my reward——"

"What an angel!" thought d'Arthez.

"In short, though the Duchesse d'Uxelles cared more for M. de Maufrigneuse than for the poor Diane whom you see before you, I have never borne her a grudge. My mother had scarcely seen me; she had forgotten me; but her behavior to me, as between woman and woman, was bad; and what is bad between woman and woman becomes hateful between mother and daughter. Mothers that lead such a life as the Duchesse d'Uxelles led keep their daughters at a distance: I only 'came out' a fortnight before my marriage. Judge of my innocence! I knew nothing; I was incapable of guessing the motives that brought the match about. I had a fine fortune—sixty thousand livres a year from forests, which they either could not sell or had forgotten to sell during the Revolution, and the Château d'Anzy in the Nivernais to which the forest belonged. M. de Maufrigneuse was burdened with debts. If I afterwards came to understand what debts meant, at the time of my marriage I was too completely ignorant of life to suspect the significance of the word. The accumulated interest of my fortune went to pacify my husband's creditors.

"M. de Maufrigneuse was thirty-eight years old when I was married to him; but those years were like a soldier's campaigns, they should count double. Ah, he was far more than seventy-six years old. My mother at the age of forty had still some pretensions to beauty; and I found that I was between jealousy on either side. What a life I led for the next ten years! . . . Ah! if people but knew how the poor, much suspected young wife suffered! To be watched by

a mother who was jealous of her own daughter! Ah, God! . . . You writers of tragedies will never invent a drama so dark and so cruel! I think, from the little I know of literature, that a play as a rule is a series of events, conversations, and actions which lead to the catastrophe; but this thing of which I am speaking to you is a most dreadful catastrophe without end. It is as if the avalanche that fell this morning should fall again at night—and yet again next morning. A cold shudder runs through me while I speak of it, while I light up the cavern from which there was no escape, the cold, gloomy place where I used to live. If you must know all, the birth of my child—altogether mine, indeed, for you must surely have been struck by his likeness to me?—he has my hair, my eyes, the outline of my face, my mouth, my smile, my chin, my teeth—well, my child's birth was due either to chance or to some agreement between my mother and my husband. For long after my marriage I was still a girl; I was abandoned, so to speak, directly afterwards; I was a mother, but a girl still. The Duchess was pleased to prolong the period of ignorance, and to attain this end a mother has horrible advantages. As for me, a poor, little creature brought up like a mystic rose in a convent, I knew nothing of married life, I developed late, and felt very happy; I rejoiced over the good understanding and the harmony that prevailed in the family. I did not care much for my husband, and he took no pains to please me; and at length my thoughts were altogether diverted from him by the first joys of motherhood, joys the more keenly felt because I had no suspicion that there could be any others. So much had been dinned into my ears about the respect that a mother owed herself! And besides, a girl always loves to 'play at mamma.' At that age a child is as good as a doll. I was so proud too to have that lovely flower, for Georges was a lovely child—a wonder! How could one think of society while one had the pleasure of nursing and tending a little angel? I adore little children while they are quite little and pink and white. So I saw no one but my baby; I lived with him; I would not allow his nurse to dress or undress him or to change his

clothes. The little cares that grow so wearisome to the mother of a regiment of babes were all pure pleasure to me. But after three or four years, as I am not altogether a fool, the light broke in upon me in spite of all the pains they took to bandage my eyes. Can you imagine me when the awakening came, four years afterwards, in 1819? *Deux Frères Ennemis* is a rose-water tragedy compared with the dramatic situation in which the Duchess and I, mother and daughter, were placed with regard to each other. Then I defied both her and my husband, by flirting publicly in a way that made people talk. Heaven knows what they did not say. You can understand, my friend, that the men with whom I was accused of light conduct were simply daggers that I used to defend myself against the enemy. My thoughts were so full of revenge that I did not feel the wounds that I dealt myself. I was innocent as a child; people looked upon me as a depraved woman, one of the worst of women. I knew nothing of this.

"The world is very stupid, very ignorant, very blind. People only penetrate into the secrets that interest them and serve their spite; but when the greatest and noblest things are to be seen, they put their hands before their eyes. And yet, it seems to me that the pride that thrilled through me and shook me in those days, the indignant innocence in my expression and attitudes, would have been a godsend to a great painter. The tempest of anger in me must have flashed like lightning through a ballroom; my disdain must have poured out like a flood. It was wasted passion. Nothing save the indignation of twenty years can rise to such sublime tragic heights. As we grow older we cannot feel indignant, we are tired; evil is not a surprise; we grow cowardly, we are afraid. As for me, I made fine progress. I acted like the veriest fool; I bore the blame of wrongdoing, and had none of the pleasure. I enjoyed compromising myself. I played child's tricks.

"I went to Italy with a hare-brained boy; he made love to me, and I threw him over; but when I found out that he had got himself into a scrape on my account (he had forged a bill), I hurried to the rescue. My mother and

my husband, who knew the secret of it all, kept a tight hand over me as an extravagant wife. Oh! that time I went to the King. Louis XVIII., though he had no heart, was touched. He gave me a hundred thousand francs out of the privy purse. The Marquis d'Esgrignon (you may perhaps have met him in society, he married a very rich heiress afterwards), the Marquis d'Esgrignon was rescued from the depths into which he plunged for me. This adventure, brought about by my heedlessness, made me reflect. I saw then that I was the first to suffer from my revenge. My mother and husband and father-in-law had everyone on their side; they stood to all appearance between me and the consequences of my recklessness. My mother knew that I was far too proud, too great, too truly a d'Uxelles, to do anything commonplace; about this time she grew frightened by the mischief she had done. She was fifty-two years old. She left Paris and went to live at d'Uxelles. Now she repents of her sins towards me, and expiates them by the most extravagant devotion and boundless love. But in 1823 she left me alone, face to face with M. de Maufrigneuse.

"Oh, my friend, you men cannot know what an elderly man of pleasure is; nor what a house is like when a man is accustomed to have women of the world burning incense before him, and finds neither censer nor perfumes at home; when he is dead to everything, and jealous for that very reason. When M. de Maufrigneuse was mine alone, I tried, I tried to be a good wife; but I came into conflict with the asperities of a morose temper, with all the fancies of an effete voluptuary; the driveling puerilities, the vain self-sufficiency of a man who was, to tell truth, the most tedious, maundering grumbler in the world. He treated me like a little girl; it gave him pleasure to humiliate me on every occasion, to crush me with the bludgeon of his experience, and to show me how completely ignorant I was. He mortified me at every moment. He did everything, in fact, to make himself detestable and to give me a right to deceive him; but for three or four years I was the dupe of my own heart and my desire to do right. Do you know what a shameful speech it was that urged me to fresh recklessness?

Could you imagine the supreme lengths to which slander is carried in society?—'The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse has gone back to her husband,' people said.—'Pooh! out of sheer depravity; it is a triumph to quicken the dead, nothing else remains for her to do,' replied my best friend, a relative at whose house I had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Mme. d'Espard!" exclaimed Daniel, aghast.

"Oh, I have forgiven her, my friend. The speech was extremely clever, to go no further, and I may perhaps have said more cruel things of other unhappy women who were quite as pure as I was."

Again d'Arthez kissed her hands. The sainted woman had chopped her mother in pieces and served her up to him; the Prince de Cadignan, whose acquaintance we have previously made, had been put forward as an Othello of the blackest dye; and now she was acknowledging her faults and scourging herself vigorously—all to assume, for the eyes of this guileless man of letters, that virgin estate which the simplest woman tries at all costs to offer to her lover.

"You can understand, my friend, that when I went back into the world, it was to make a sensation, and I intended to make a sensation. There were fresh struggles to be gone through; I had to gain independence and to counteract M. de Maufrigneuse. So I began a life of dissipation for new reasons. I tried to forget myself, I tried to forget real life in a life of dreams; I shone in society, I entertained; I was a Princess, and I got into debt. At home I found forgetfulness in sleep. Beautiful, high-spirited, and reckless, I began a new life in the world; but in the weary struggle between dreams and reality, I ran through my fortune.

"The revolt of 1830 came just as this chapter out of the *Arabian Nights* drew to an end; and just at that time I found the pure and sacred love which I longed to know. (I am frank with you!) It was not unnatural (admit) that when a woman's heart had been repressed again and again by fate, it should awaken at last at the age when a woman sees that she has been cheated of her due? I saw that so many women about me were happy through love. Oh! why was Michel Chrestien so much in awe of me? There again

is another irony in my life. There was no help for it. When the crash came I had lost everything; I had not a single illusion left; I had pressed out the last drops of all experience, but of one fruit I had not tasted, and I had neither taste nor teeth left for it. In short, by the time I was obliged to leave the world I was disenchanted. There was something providential in this, as in the insensibility that prepares us for death," she added, with a gesture full of religious unction.

"Everything that happened just then helped me," she continued; "the downfall and ruin of the Monarchy buried me out of sight. My son makes up to me for a great deal. Motherhood compensates us for all our thwarted powers of loving. People are astonished by my retreat, but I have found happiness. Oh! if you but knew how happy the poor creature before you has grown. The joys which I have not known, and shall never know, are all forgotten in the joy of sacrificing myself for my son's sake. Who could think that life, for the Princesse de Cadignan, would be summed up by a wretched marriage-night, the adventures with which she is credited, and a childish defiance of two dark passions? Nobody could believe it. At this day I am afraid of everything. I remember so many delusions and misfortunes that I should be sure to repulse genuine feeling, and pure love for love's sake; just as rich men repulse the deserving poor because some hypocritical knave has disgusted them with charity. All this is horrible, is it not? But, believe me, this that I have told you is the history of many another woman."

The last words were spoken in light jesting tones, which recalled the flippant woman of fashion. D'Arthez was dazed. The convict sent to the hulks for robbery and murder with aggravating circumstances, or for forging a signature on a bill, was in his eyes a saintly innocent compared with men and women of the world. The atrocious jeremiad had been forged in the arsenal of falsehood, and dipped in the waters of the Parisian Styx; there was an unmistakable ring of truth in the Duchess's tones. D'Arthez gazed at her for a little while; and she (adorable woman) lay in the

depths of her great chair, her white hands resting over the arms like drops of dew at the edge of a flower-petal. She was overcome by her own revelations; she seemed to have lived again through all her past sorrows as she spoke of them, and now sank exhausted. She was an angel of melancholy in fact.

Suddenly she sat upright, and raised her hand, while lightnings blazed in the eyes that were supposed to be purified by twenty years of chastity. "Judge of the impression that your friend's love must have made on me!" she cried, "but by the savage irony of fate—or was it God's irony?—he died; he died when (I confess it) I was so thirsty for love that if a man had been worthy of me, he would have found me weak; he died to save the life of another, and that other was—who but M. de Cadignan? Are you surprised to find me pensive?"

It was the last stroke. Poor d'Arthez could bear no more. He fell on his knees before her, he hid his face in her hands, and his tears fell fast—happy tears, such as angels might shed, if angels weep. And since Daniel's face was hidden, Mme. de Cadignan could allow a mischievous smile of triumph to steal across her mouth, a smile such as monkeys might summon up over a piece of superlative mischief, if monkeys laugh.

"Aha! I have him fast!" thought she.

And true enough, she had him fast.

"Then you are——" He began raising that fine head of his to gaze lovingly into her eyes.

"Virgin and martyr," she finished his sentence for him, smiling at the commonplace phrase, but her cruel smile lent an enchanting significance to the words. "I laugh," she said, "because I am thinking of the Princess as the world knows her, of that Duchesse de Maufrigneuse to whom the world assigns de Marsay as a lover; and the villainous political bravo, de Trailles; and empty-headed little d'Esgrignon, and Rastignac, and Rubempré, and ambassadors and Cabinet ministers and Russian generals,—and all Europe, for anything I know. There has been much gossip about this album that I had made; people believe that all

my admirers were my lovers. Oh! it is shocking! I cannot think how I can suffer a man at my feet; I ought to despise them all; that should be my creed."

She rose and stood in the window; her manner of going was full of magnificent suggestion.

D'Arthez stayed on the hearth-stool where he had been sitting. He did not dare to follow the Princess, but he gazed at her, he heard her use her handkerchief. It was a pure matter of form; what is a princess that blows her nose? Diane tried to do the impossible to confirm d'Arthez's belief in her sensibility. His angel was in tears! He flew to her, put his arm about her waist, and held her tightly to him.

"No, no, leave me," she murmured faintly. "I have too many doubts to be good for anything. The task of reconciling me with life is beyond a man's strength."

"Diane! I will give you love for all the life that you have lost!"

"No, do not talk to me like that," she answered. "I feel guilty; I am trembling at this moment as if I had committed the worst of sins."

Diane had recovered a little maid's innocence, yet nevertheless she stood before him august and great and noble as a queen. It was a clever maneuver, so clever that she had wheeled round from seeming, and reached the actual truth; and as for d'Arthez, no words will describe the effect produced by it upon his inexperience and open nature. Great man of letters as he was, he stood dumb with admiration, a passive spectator, waiting for a word, while the Princess waited for a kiss. But she had grown too sacred to him for that. Diane felt cold in the window; her feet were freezing; she went back to her old position in the chair.

"He will be a long while about it," thought she, looking at Daniel with a proud forehead and face sublime with virtue.

"Is she a woman?" the profound observer of human nature was asking of himself. "How should one act with her?"

They spent their time till two o'clock in the morning in

the fond, foolish talk that such women as the Princess can turn into adorable intercourse. She was too old, she said, too faded, too much of a wreck; d'Arthez proved to her that she had the most delicate, soft, and fragrant skin; delicious to touch, and white and fair to see, of which things she was fully convinced in her own mind. She was young; she was in her flower. Her beauty was disputed, charm by charm, detail by detail, with—"Do you think so?—You are raving!—This is desire.—In a fortnight you will see me as I am.—In truth, I am verging on forty; how should anyone love a woman of my age?"

D'Arthez was impetuous as a schoolboy, his eloquence was sown thickly with the most extravagant words. And the Princess, listening, laughed within herself, while she heard the ingenious writer talking like a love-sick lieutenant, and seemed to drink in the nonsense, and to be quite touched by it.

Out in the street d'Arthez asked himself whether he ought not to have been less in awe of her. As he went through the strange confidences that had been made to him—naturally, they have been much abridged and condensed here, for the mellifluous utterances given in full, with their appropriate commentary of expression and gesture, would fill a volume—as he looked through his memory, the plausibility of the romance, the depths below the surface, and the Princess's tones, all combined to foil the retrospective sagacity of an acute but straightforward man.

"It is true," he told himself as he lay wide awake, "it is true that there are tragedies in society. Society hides such horrors as this beneath the flowers of delicate luxury, the embellishments of scandal, and the sparkle of anecdotes. We cannot imagine anything that has not happened. Poor Diane! Michel caught a glimse of the enigma when he told us that there were volcanic fires under the ice! And Bianchon and Rastignac are right too. When a man can find his high ideals and the intoxication of desire both blended in the love of a woman—a woman of quick intelligence and refinement and dainty ways—it must surely be unspeakable bliss."

He tried to fathom the love in his heart, and found no limits.

Towards two o'clock next day, Mme. d'Espard called on the Princess. An intense curiosity brought her. For more than a month she had neither seen her friend nor received a single tell-tale word. Nothing could be more amusing than the first half hour of the conversation between two daughters of Eve endowed with the wisdom of the serpent. Diane de Cadignan shunned the subject of d'Arthez as she would avoid a yellow dress. And the Marquise wheeled about the question as a Bedouin Arab might hover about a rich caravan. Diane enjoyed the situation; the Marquise grew furious. Diane was watching her opportunity; she meant to turn her dear friend to account as a sporting dog. And one of the two celebrated women was more than a match for the other. The Princess rose a head above the Marquise; and Mme. d'Espard in her own mind admitted her inferiority. Herein, possibly, lay the secret of the bond between them. The weaker spirit of the two lay low, feigning an attachment, watching for the moment so long looked for by the weak, the chance of springing at the throat of the strong, and leaving the impress of one joyous bite. Diane saw this perfectly well. The rest of the world was completely deceived by the amenities that passed between the two dear friends.

The Princess waited; and as soon as she saw the question rise to her friend's lips, she said, "Well, dear; I owe a great, complete, and boundless happiness to you."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember our ruminations three months ago, as we sat out in the garden on the bench under the jessamine in the sun? Ah! well; no one can love like a man of genius. I would willingly say of my great Daniel d'Arthez as Catherine de' Medici said of the Duke of Alva, 'One salmon's head is worth all the frogs' heads in the world.'"

"I am not at all surprised that you do not come to me," said Mme. d'Espard.

"Promise me, my angel, if he goes to see you, not to say a word of me," continued the Princess, as she took the

Marquise's hand. "I am happy—oh! happy beyond words—and you know how far an epigram or a jest may go in society. A word can be fatal; some people can put so much poison in a word. If you only knew how I have wished during the past week that you too might find such a passionate love! And, indeed, it is sweet; it is a glorious triumph for us women if we may finish our lives as women thus, with an ardent, pure, complete, whole-hearted, and devoted love to soothe us at last after so long a quest."

"Why ask me to be true to my best friend?" said Mme. d'Espard. "Can you think me capable of playing you a vile trick?"

"When a woman possesses such a treasure, it is so natural to fear to lose it, that the thought of fear occurs to her at once. I am absurd. Forgive me, dear."

A few moments later, the Marquise took leave.

"What a character she will give me!" thought the Princess as she watched her departure. "But I will save her the trouble of tearing Daniel away; I will send him to her at once."

Daniel came in a few minutes afterwards. In the middle of an interesting conversation the Princess suddenly interrupted him, laying her beautiful hand on his arm.

"Forgive me, my friend, but I might forget to mention something; it seems a silly trifle, yet it is a matter of the utmost importance. You have not set foot in Mme. d'Espard's house since that day—a thousand times blessed!—when I met you for the first time. Go to her; not out of politeness, but for my sake. Perhaps she may be offended with me; she may possibly have chanced to hear that you have scarcely left my house, so to speak, since her dinner-party. And besides, my friend, I should not like you to give up your connections and society, nor your work and occupations. I should be more outrageously slandered than ever. What would they not say of me?—'That I am holding you in a leash, that I am monopolizing you, that I am afraid of comparisons, that I want to be talked about even now, and I am taking good care to keep my conquest, for I know that it will be the last'—and so on and so on. Who could

guess that you are my one and only friend? If you love me as you tell me you do, you will make people believe that we are to each other as brother and sister and nothing more. —Go on."

There was an ineffable sweetness in the way in which this charming woman arranged her robes so as to fall gracefully; it always schooled d'Arthez into obedience. A vague, subtle refinement in her discourse touched him even to tears. Other women might haggle and dispute the way inch by inch, in sofa-converse; the Princess rose at once above all ignoble and vulgar bargainings to a height of greatness unknown before. She had no need to utter a word, they understood their union nobly. It should be when they willed it upon either side; there was no yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow for them; there should be none of the interminable hoisting of the pennon styled "sacrifice" by ordinary women, doubtless because they know how much they are certain to lose, while a woman who has everything to gain knows that the festival will be her day of triumph.

Diane's words had been vague as a promise, sweet as hope, and binding, nevertheless, as a pledge. Let it be admitted at once, the only women who can rise thus high are illustrious and supreme deceivers like Diane; they are queens still when other women find a lord and master. By this time d'Arthez had learned to measure the distance that separates these few from the many. The Princess was always beautiful, never wanting to herself. Perhaps the secret lies in the art with which a great lady can lay veil after veil aside, till in this position she stands like an antique statue. To retain a single shred would be indecent. The bourgeoise always tries to clothe herself.

Broken to the yoke by tenderness, and sustained by the noblest virtues, d'Arthez obediently went to Mme. d'Espard's. On him she exerted her most charming coquetry. She was very careful not to mention the Princess's name; she merely asked him to dine with her at an early date.

On that day d'Arthez found a large party invited to meet him. The Marquise had asked Rastignac, Blondet, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, Maxime de Trailles, the Mar-

quis d'Esgrignon, the two Vandenesses, du Tillet (one of the richest bankers in Paris), the Baron de Nucingen, Nathan, Lady Dudley, one or two of the wiliest attachés from the embassy, and the Chevalier d'Espard. The Chevalier, be it said, was one of the most astute personages in the room, and counted for a good half in the schemes of his sister-in-law.

Maxime de Trailles turned to d'Arthez.

"You see a good deal of the Princesse de Cadignan, don't you?" he asked, with a laugh.

D'Arthez replied with a stiff inclination of the head. Maxime de Trailles was a bravo of a superior order; he feared neither God nor man; he shrank from nothing. Women had loved him, he had ruined them, and made them pledge their diamonds to pay his debts; but his shortcomings were covered by a brilliant veneer, by charming manners, and a diabolical cleverness. Everybody feared him, everybody despised him; but nobody was bold enough to treat him with anything short of extreme civility. He could see nothing of all this, or possibly he lent himself to the general dissimulation. De Marsay had helped him to reach the highest elevation that he could attain. De Marsay, having known Maxime from old, judged him capable of fulfilling certain diplomatic functions in the secret service, of which Maxime had, in fact, acquitted himself to admiration. D'Arthez had been mixed up in political affairs for some time past; he knew enough of the man to fathom his character; and he alone, it may be, was sufficiently high-minded to say aloud what others thought.

"It is for her, no tout, dat you neklect de Chaimper," put in the Baron de Nucingen.

"Ah! a man could not set foot in the house of a more dangerous woman," the Marquis d'Esgrignon exclaimed, lowering his voice. "My disgraceful marriage is entirely owing to her."

"Dangerous?" repeated Mme. d'Espard. "You must not say such things of my best friend. Anything that I have ever heard or seen of the Princess seemed to me to be prompted by the highest motives."

"Pray, let the Marquis say his say," said Rastignac. "When a man has been thrown by a mettled horse, he will pick faults in the animal and sell it."

The Marquis d'Esgrignon was nettled by the speech. He looked across at Daniel d'Arthez.

"Monsieur is not on such terms with the Princess that we may not speak of her, I hope?"

D'Arthez was silent; and d'Esgrignon, who did not lack wit, retorted on Rastignac with an apologetic portrait of Mme. de Cadignan. His sketch set the table in good-humor; but as d'Arthez was absolutely in the dark, he bent over to Mme. de Montcornet and asked her to explain the joke.

"Well, judging by the good opinion that you have of the Princess, you are an exception; but all the other guests, it would seem, have been in her good graces."

"I can assure you that that view is totally false," returned Daniel.

"Yet here is M. d'Esgrignon, of a noble Perche family, who was utterly ruined for her twelve years ago, and all but went to the scaffold besides."

"I know about it," said d'Arthez. "Mme. de Cadignan rescued M. d'Esgrignon from the Assize Court, and this is how he shows his gratitude to-day."

Mme. de Montcornet stared at d'Arthez; she looked almost dazed with astonishment and curiosity. Then she glanced at Mme. d'Espard, as who should say, "He is bewitched!"

During this short conversation Mme. d'Espard had defended her friend; but her defense, after the manner of a lightning conductor, had drawn down the tempest. When d'Arthez gave his attention to the general conversation, Maxime de Trailles brought out his epigram.

"In Diane's case, depravity is not the effect but the cause; perhaps her exquisite naturalness is due to this; she does not try after studied effects; she invents nothing. She brings you out the most subtle refinements as the sudden inspiration of the most artless love; and you cannot help believing her too."

The phrase might have been prepared for a man of

d'Arthez's caliber; it came out with such effect that it was like a conclusion. Nobody said any more of the Princess; she seemed to be disposed of. But d'Arthez looked first at de Trailles and then at d'Esgrignon, with a sarcastic expression.

"She took a leaf out of a man's book, that has been her greatest mistake," he said. "Like a man, she squanders marriage jewels, she sends her lovers to the money-lenders, she ruins orphans, she devours dowries, she melts down old châteaux, she inspires crimes—and perhaps commits them herself—but——"

Never in their lives had either of the two personages addressed heard language so much to the purpose. When d'Arthez came to a pause on that *but*, the whole table was dumfounded; the spectators sat, fork in hand, looking from the intrepid man of letters to the Princess's treacherous enemies. There was an awful pause; they waited to see what would come next.

"*But*," pursued d'Arthez, with satirical flippancy, "Mme. de Cadignan has this one advantage over men. If anyone risks himself for her, she comes to the rescue, and says no ill of any man afterwards. Why should not one woman, among so many, amuse herself with men, as men play with women? Why should not the fair sex take a turn at that game from time to time?——"

"Genius is more than a match for cleverness," said Blondet, addressing Nathan.

And, indeed, d'Arthez's avalanche of epigrams was like a reply from a battery to a discharge of musketry. They hastened to change the subject. Neither the Comte de Trailles nor the Marquis d'Esgrignon felt disposed to try conclusions with d'Arthez. When coffee was served, Blondet and Nathan went over to him with an alacrity which no one cared to imitate, so difficult was it to reconcile admiration of his behavior with the fear of making two powerful enemies.

"We knew before to-day that your character is as great as your talent," said Blondet. "You bore yourself just now not like a man, but rather as a god. Not to be carried away by one's feelings or imagination, not to blunder into

taking up arms in the defense of the woman one loves (as people expected you to do), a blunder which would have meant a triumph for these people, for they are consumed with jealousy of celebrated men of letters—ah! permit me to say that this is the supreme height of statecraft in private life."

"You are a statesman," added Nathan. "It is as clever as it is difficult to avenge a woman without defending her."

"The Princess is one of the heroines of the Legitimist party," d'Arthez returned coolly; "surely it is the duty of every gentleman to champion her on those grounds? Her services to the cause would excuse the most reckless life."

"He will not show his hand," said Nathan to Blondet.

"Just as if the Princess were worth the trouble," added Rastignac, as he joined the group.

D'Arthez went to the Princess. She was waiting for him in an agony of anxiety. She had authorized an experiment which might prove fatal. For the first time in her life she suffered at heart, and a perspiration broke out over her. Others would tell d'Arthez the truth, she had told him lies; if he should believe the truth, she did not know what she should do; for a character so noble, a man so complete, a soul so pure, a conscience so ingenuous, had never passed through her hands before. It was because she longed to know a true love that she had woven such a tissue of cruel lies. She felt that poignant love in her heart, she loved d'Arthez, and she was condemned to deceive him, for him she must always be the sublime actress who had played this comedy for his benefit. She heard d'Arthez's step in the dining-room with a great agitation; a shock quivered through the very springs of existence. Then she knew that her happiness was at stake; she had never felt such emotion before, yet hers had been a most adventurous life for a woman of her rank. With eyes gazing into space, she saw d'Arthez in one complete vision, saw through the outward form into his inmost soul. Suspicion had not so much as brushed him with her bat's wing! The reaction set in after the terrible throes of fear, and joy almost overcame Diane;

for every creature is stronger to bear pain than to stand the extreme of happiness.

"Daniel!" she cried, rising to her feet and holding out her arms, "I have been slandered, and you have avenged me."

Daniel was utterly astounded by the words, for the roots of them lay far down out of his sight. He felt two beautiful hands clasp his face, and the Princess kissed him reverently on the forehead.

"How did you know?——"

"Oh, illustrious simpleton! do you not see that I love you madly?"

From that day there was no more question of the Princesse de Cadignan or of d'Arthez. The Princess has since inherited some property from her mother; she spends her summers with the great man of letters in a villa at Geneva, returning to Paris for a few months during the winter. D'Arthez only shows himself at the Chamber. What is still more significant, he very rarely publishes anything.

Is this the catastrophe of the story? Yes, for those that can understand, but not for people who must have everything told.

Les Jardies, *June* 1839.

THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE

THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE

To a Lord.

. . . . . .

1845.

I

GILLETTE

ON a cold December morning in the year 1612, a young man, whose clothing was somewhat of the thinnest, was walking to and fro before a gateway in the Rue des Grands-Augustins in Paris. He went up and down the street before this house with the irresolution of a gallant who dares not venture into the presence of the mistress whom he loves for the first time, easy of access though she may be; but after a sufficiently long interval of hesitation, he at last crossed the threshold and inquired of an old woman, who was sweeping out a large room on the ground floor, whether Master Porbus was within. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, the young man went slowly up the staircase, like a gentleman but newly come to court, and doubtful as to his reception by the king. He came to a stand once more on the landing at the head of the stairs, and again he hesitated before raising his hand to the grotesque knocker on the door of the studio, where doubtless the painter was at work—Master Porbus, sometime painter in ordinary to Henri IV. till Mary de' Medici took Rubens into favor.

The young man felt deeply stirred by an emotion that must thrill the hearts of all great artists when, in the pride of their youth and their first love of art, they come into the presence of a master or stand before a masterpiece. For all human sentiments there is a time of early blossoming, a day of generous enthusiasm that gradually fades until nothing is left of happiness but a memory, and glory is known for a delusion. Of all these delicate and short-lived emotions, none so resemble love as the passion of a young

artist for his art, as he is about to enter on the blissful martyrdom of his career of glory and disaster, of vague expectations and real disappointments.

Those who have missed this experience in the early days of light purses; who have not, in the dawn of their genius, stood in the presence of a master and felt the throbbing of their hearts, will always carry in their inmost souls a chord that has never been touched, and in their work an indefinable quality will be lacking, a something in the stroke of the brush, a mysterious element that we call poetry. The swaggerers, so puffed up by self-conceit that they are confident oversoon of their success, can never be taken for men of talent save by fools. From this point of view, if youthful modesty is the measure of youthful genius, the stranger on the staircase might be allowed to have something in him; for he seemed to possess the indescribable diffidence, the early timidity that artists are bound to lose in the course of a great career, even as pretty women lose it as they make progress in the arts of coquetry. Self-distrust vanishes as triumph succeeds to triumph, and modesty is, perhaps, distrust of self.

The poor neophyte was so overcome by the consciousness of his own presumption and insignificance, that it began to look as if he was hardly likely to penetrate into the studio of the painter, to whom we owe the wonderful portrait of Henri IV. But fate was propitious; an old man came up the staircase. From the quaint costume of this newcomer, his collar of magnificent lace, and a certain serene gravity in his bearing, the first arrival thought that this personage must be either a patron or a friend of the court painter. He stood aside therefore upon the landing to allow the visitor to pass, scrutinizing him curiously the while. Perhaps he might hope to find the good nature of an artist or to receive the good offices of an amateur not unfriendly to the arts; but besides an almost diabolical expression in the face that met his gaze, there was that indescribable something which has an irresistible attraction for artists.

Picture that face. A bald high forehead and rugged jutting brows above a small flat nose turned up at the end,

as in the portraits of Socrates and Rabelais, deep lines about the mocking mouth; a short chin, carried proudly, covered with a grizzled pointed beard; sea-green eyes that age might seem to have dimmed were it not for the contrast between the iris and the surrounding mother-of-pearl tints, so that it seemed as if under the stress of anger or enthusiasm there would be a magnetic power to quell or kindle in their glances. The face was withered beyond wont by the fatigue of years, yet it seemed aged still more by the thoughts that had worn away both soul and body. There were no lashes to the deep-set eyes, and scarcely a trace of the arching lines of the eyebrows above them. Set this head on a spare and feeble frame, place it in a frame of lace wrought like an engraved silver fish-slice, imagine a heavy gold chain over the old man's black doublet, and you will have some dim idea of this strange personage, who seemed still more fantastic in the somber twilight of the staircase. One of Rembrandt's portraits might have stepped down from its frame to walk in an appropriate atmosphere of gloom, such as the great painter loved. The older man gave the younger a shrewd glance, and knocked thrice at the door. It was opened by a man of forty or thereabouts, who seemed to be an invalid.

"Good-day, master."

Porbus bowed respectfully, and held the door open for the younger man to enter, thinking that the latter accompanied his visitor; and when he saw that the neophyte stood awhile as if spellbound, feeling, as every artist-nature must feel, the fascinating influence of the first sight of a studio in which the material processes of art are revealed, Porbus troubled himself no more about this second comer.

All the light in the studio came from a window in the roof, and was concentrated upon an easel, where a canvas stood untouched as yet save for three or four outlines in chalk. The daylight scarcely reached the remoter angles and corners of the vast room; they were as dark as night, but the silver ornamental breastplate of a Reiter's corselet, that hung upon the wall, attracted a stray gleam to its dim abiding-place among the brown shadows; or a shaft of light shot

across the carved and glistening surface of an antique sideboard covered with curious silver-plate, or struck out a line of glittering dots among the raised threads of the golden warp of some old brocaded curtains, where the lines of the stiff heavy folds were broken, as the stuff had been flung carelessly down to serve as a model.

Plaster *écorchés* stood about the room; and here and there, on shelves and tables, lay fragments of classical sculpture—torsos of antique goddesses, worn smooth as though all the years of the centuries that had passed over them had been lovers' kisses. The walls were covered, from floor to ceiling, with countless sketches in charcoal, red chalk, or pen and ink. Amid the litter and confusion of color boxes, overturned stools, flasks of oil, and essences, there was just room to move so as to reach the illuminated circular space where the easel stood. The light from the window in the roof fell full upon Porbus's pale face and on the ivory-tinted forehead of his strange visitor. But in another moment the younger man heeded nothing but a picture that had already became famous even in those stormy days of political and religious revolution, a picture that a few of the zealous worshipers, who have so often kept the sacred fire of art alive in evil days, were wont to go on pilgrimage to see. The beautiful panel represented a Saint Mary of Egypt about to pay her passage across the seas. It was a masterpiece destined for Mary de' Medici, who sold it in later years of poverty.

"I like your saint," the old man remarked, addressing Porbus. "I would give you ten golden crowns for her over and above the price the Queen is paying; but as for putting a spoke in that wheel . . . the devil take it!"

"It is good then?"

"Hey! hey!" said the old man; "good, say you?—Yes and no. Your good woman is not badly done, but she is not alive. You artists fancy that when a figure is correctly drawn, and everything in its place according to the rules of anatomy, there is nothing more to be done. You make up the flesh tints beforehand on your palettes according to your formulæ, and fill in the outlines with due care that

one side of the face shall be darker than the other; and because you look from time to time at a naked woman who stands on the platform before you, you fondly imagine that you have copied nature, think yourselves to be painters, believe that you have wrested His secret from God. Pshaw! You may know your syntax thoroughly and make no blunders in your grammar, but it takes that and something more to make a great poet. Look at your saint, Porbus! At a first glance she is admirable; look at her again, and you see at once that she is glued to the background, and that you could not walk round her. She is a silhouette that turns but one side of her face to all beholders, a figure cut out of canvas, an image with no power to move nor change her position. I feel as if there were no air between that arm and the background, no space, no sense of distance in your canvas. The perspective is perfectly correct, the strength of the coloring is accurately diminished with the distance; but, in spite of these praiseworthy efforts, I could never bring myself to believe that the warm breath of life comes and goes in that beautiful body. It seems to me that if I laid my hand on the firm rounded throat, it would be cold as marble to the touch. No, my friend, the blood does not flow beneath that ivory skin, the tide of life does not flush those delicate fibers, the purple veins that trace a network beneath the transparent amber of her brow and breast. Here the pulse seems to beat, there it is motionless, life and death are at strife in every detail; here you see a woman, there a statue, there again a corpse. Your creation is incomplete. You had only power to breathe a portion of your soul into your beloved work. The fire of Prometheus died out again and again in your hands; many a spot in your picture has not been touched by the divine flame.

"But how is it, dear master?" Porbus asked respectfully, while the young man with difficulty repressed his strong desire to beat the critic.

"Ah!" said the old man, "it is this! You have halted between two manners. You have hesitated between drawing and color, between the dogged attention to detail, the stiff precision of the German masters and the dazzling glow, the

joyous exuberance of Italian painters. You have set yourself to imitate Hans Holbein and Titian, Albrecht Dürer and Paul Veronese in a single picture. A magnificent ambition truly, but what has come of it? Your work has neither the severe charm of a dry execution nor the magical illusion of Italian *chiaroscuro*. Titian's rich golden coloring poured into Albrecht Dürer's austere outlines has shattered them, like molten bronze bursting through the mold that is not strong enough to hold it. In other places the outlines have held firm, imprisoning and obscuring the magnificent glowing flood of Venetian color. The drawing of the face is not perfect, the coloring is not perfect; traces of that unlucky indecision are to be seen everywhere. Unless you felt strong enough to fuse the two opposed manners in the fire of your own genius, you should have cast in your lot boldly with the one or the other, and so have obtained the unity which simulates one of the conditions of life itself. Your work is only true in the centers; your outlines are false, they project nothing, there is no hint of anything behind them. There is truth here," said the old man, pointing to the breast of the Saint, "and again here," he went on, indicating the rounded shoulder. "But there," once more returning to the column of the throat, "everything is false. Let us go no farther into detail; you would be disheartened."

The old man sat down on a stool, and remained a while without speaking, with his face buried in his hands.

"Yet I studied that throat from the life, dear master," Porbus began; "it happens sometimes, for our misfortune, that real effects in nature look improbable when transferred to canvas——"

"The aim of art is not to copy nature, but to express it. You are not a servile copyist, but a poet!" cried the old man sharply, cutting Porbus short with an imperious gesture. "Otherwise a sculptor might make a plaster cast of a living woman and save himself all further trouble. Well, try to make a cast of your mistress's hand, and set up the thing before you. You will see a monstrosity, a dead mass, bearing no resemblance to the living hand; you would be com-

pelled to have recourse to the chisel of a sculptor who, without making an exact copy, would represent for you its movement and its life. We must detect the spirit, the informing soul in the appearances of things and beings. Effects! What are effects but the accidents of life, not life itself? A hand, since I have taken that example, is not only a part of a body, it is the expression and extension of a thought that must be grasped and rendered. Neither painter nor poet nor sculptor may separate the effect from the cause, which are inevitably contained the one in the other. There begins the real struggle! Many a painter achieves success instinctively, unconscious of the task that is set before art. You draw a woman, yet you do not see her! Not so do you succeed in wresting Nature's secrets from her! You are reproducing mechanically the model that you copied in your master's studio. You do not penetrate far enough into the inmost secrets of the mystery of form; you do not seek with love enough and perseverance enough after the form that baffles and eludes you. Beauty is a thing severe and unapproachable, never to be won by a languid lover. You must lie in wait for her coming and take her unawares, press her hard and clasp her in a tight embrace, and force her to yield. Form is a Proteus more intangible and more manifold than the Proteus of the legend; compelled, only after long wrestling, to stand forth manifest in his true aspect. Some of you are satisfied with the first shape, or at most by the second or the third that appears. Not thus wrestle the victors, the unvanquished painters who never suffer themselves to be deluded by all those treacherous shadow-shapes; they persevere till Nature at the last stands bare to their gaze, and her very soul is revealed.

"In this manner worked Rafael," said the old man, taking off his cap to express his reverence for the King of Art. "His transcendent greatness came of the intimate sense that, in him, seems as if it would shatter external form. Form in his figures (as with us) is a symbol, a means of communicating sensations, ideas, the vast imaginings of a poet. Every face is a whole world. The subject of the portrait appeared for him bathed in the light of a divine vision; it was revealed

by an inner voice, the finger of God laid bare the sources of expression in the past of a whole life.

"You clothe your women in fair raiment of flesh, in gracious veiling of hair; but where is the blood, the source of passion and of calm, the cause of the particular effect? Why, this brown Egyptian of yours, my good Porbus, is a colorless creature! These figures that you set before us are painted bloodless phantoms; and you call that painting, you call that art!

"Because you have made something more like a woman than a house, you think that you have set your fingers on the goal; you are quite proud that you need not to write *currus venustus* or *pulcher homo* beside your figures, as early painters were wont to do, and you fancy that you have done wonders. Ah! my good friend, there is still something more to learn, and you will use up a great deal of chalk and cover many a canvas before you will learn it. Yes, truly, a woman carries her head in just such a way, so she holds her garments gathered into her hand; her eyes grow dreamy and soft with that expression of meek sweetness, and even so the quivering shadow of the lashes hovers upon her cheeks. It is all there, and yet it is not there. What is lacking? A nothing, but that nothing is everything.

"There you have the semblance of life, but you do not express its fullness and effluence, that indescribable something, perhaps the soul itself, that envelopes the outlines of the body like a haze; that flower of life, in short, that Titian and Rafael caught. Your utmost achievement hitherto has only brought you to the starting-point. You might now perhaps begin to do excellent work, but you grow weary all too soon; and the crowd admires, and those who know smile.

"Oh, Mabuse! oh, my master!" cried the strange speaker, "thou art a thief! Thou hast carried away the secret of life with thee!

"Nevertheless," he began again, "this picture of yours is worth more than all the paintings of that rascal Rubens, with his mountains of Flemish flesh raddled with vermilion, his torrents of red hair, his riot of color. You, at least,

have color there, and feeling and drawing—the three essentials in art."

The young man roused himself from his deep musings.

"Why, my good man, the Saint is sublime!" he cried. "There is a subtlety of imagination about those two figures, the Saint Mary and the Shipman, that cannot be found among Italian masters; I do not know a single one of them capable of imagining the Shipman's hesitation."

"Did that little malapert come with you?" asked Porbus of the older man.

"Alas! master, pardon my boldness," cried the neophyte, and the color mounted to his face. "I am unknown—a dauber by instinct, and but lately come to this city—the fountainhead of all learning."

"Set to work," said Porbus, handing him a bit of red chalk and a sheet of paper.

The newcomer quickly sketched the Saint Mary line for line.

"Aha!" exclaimed the old man. "Your name?" he added.

The young man wrote "Nicolas Poussin" below the sketch.

"Not bad that for a beginning," said the strange speaker, who had discoursed so wildly. "I see that we can talk of art in your presence. I do not blame you for admiring Porbus's saint. In the eyes of the world she is a masterpiece, and those alone who have been initiated into the inmost mysteries of art can discover her shortcomings. But it is worth while to give you the lesson, for you are able to understand it, so I will show you how little it needs to complete this picture. You must be all eyes, all attention, for it may be that such a chance of learning will never come in your way again.—Porbus! your palette."

Porbus went in search of palette and brushes. The little old man turned back his sleeves with impatient energy, seized the palette, covered with many hues, that Porbus handed to him, and snatched rather than took a handful of brushes of various sizes from the hands of his acquaintance. His pointed beard suddenly bristled—a menacing movement that expressed the prick of a lover's fancy. As he loaded his

brush, he muttered between his teeth, "These paints are only fit to fling out of the window, together with the fellow who ground them, their crudeness and falseness are disgusting! How can one paint with this?"

He dipped the tip of the brush with feverish eagerness in the different pigments, making the circuit of the palette several times more quickly than the organist of a cathedral sweeps the octaves on the keyboard of his clavier for the *O Filii* at Easter.

Porbus and Poussin, on either side of the easel, stood stock-still, watching with intense interest.

"Look, young man," he began again, "see how three or four strokes of the brush and a thin glaze of blue let in the free air to play about the head of the poor Saint, who must have felt stifled and oppressed by the close atmosphere! See how the drapery begins to flutter; you feel that it is lifted by the breeze! A moment ago it hung as heavily and stiffly as if it were held out by pins. Do you see how the satin sheen that I have just given to the breast rends the pliant, silken softness of a young girl's skin, and how the brown red, blended with burnt ocher, brings warmth into the cold gray of the deep shadow where the blood lay congealed instead of coursing through the veins? Young man, young man, no master could teach you how to do this that I am doing before your eyes. Mabuse alone possessed the secret of giving life to his figures: Mabuse had but one pupil—that was I. I have had none, and I am old. You have sufficient intelligence to imagine the rest from the glimpses that I am giving you."

While the old man was speaking, he gave a touch here and there; sometimes two strokes of the brush, sometimes a single one; but every stroke told so well, that the whole picture seemed transfigured—the painting was flooded with light. He worked with such passionate fervor, that beads of sweat gathered upon his bare forehead; he worked so quickly, in brief, impatient jerks, that it seemed to young Poussin as if some familiar spirit inhabiting the body of this strange being took a grotesque pleasure in making use of the man's hands against his own will. The unearthly glitter

of his eyes, the convulsive movements that seemed like struggles, gave to this fancy a semblance of truth which could not but stir a young imagination. The old man continued, saying as he did so—

"Paf! paf! that is how to lay it on, young man!—Little touches! come and bring a glow into those icy cold tones for me! Just so! Pon! pon! pon!" and those parts of the picture that he had pointed out as cold and lifeless flushed with warmer hues, a few bold strokes of color brought all the tones of the picture into the required harmony with the glowing tints of the Egyptian, and the differences in temperament vanished.

"Look you, youngster, the last touches make the picture. Porbus has given it a hundred strokes for every one of mine. No one thanks us for what lies beneath. Bear that in mind."

At last the restless spirit stopped, and turning to Porbus and Poussin, who were speechless with admiration, he spoke—

"This is not as good as my *Belle Noiseuse;* still one might put one's name to such a thing as this.—Yes, I would put my name to it," he added, rising to reach for a mirror, in which he looked at the picture.—"And now," he said, "will you both come and breakfast with me. I have a smoked ham and some very fair wine! . . . Eh! eh! the times may be bad, but we can still have some talk about art! We can talk like equals. . . . Here is a little fellow who has aptitude," he added, laying a hand on Nicolas Poussin's shoulder.

In this way the stranger became aware of the threadbare condition of the Norman's doublet. He drew a leather purse from his girdle, felt in it, found two gold coins, and held them out.

"I will buy your sketch," he said.

"Take it," said Porbus, as he saw the other start and flush with embarrassment, for Poussin had the pride of poverty. "Pray take it; he has a couple of king's ransoms in his pouch!"

The three came down together from the studio, and, talking of art by the way, reached a picturesque wooden house hard by the Pont Saint-Michel. Poussin wondered a moment

at its ornament, at the knocker, at the frames of the casements, at the scroll-work designs, and in the next he stood in a vast low-ceiled room. A table, covered with tempting dishes, stood near the blazing fire, and (luck unhoped for) he was in the company of two great artists full of genial good humor.

"Do not look too long at that canvas, young man," said Porbus, when he saw that Poussin was standing, struck with wonder, before a painting. "You would fall a victim to despair."

It was the *Adam* painted by Mabuse to purchase his release from the prison where his creditors had so long kept him. And as a matter of fact, the figure stood out so boldly and convincingly, that Nicolas Poussin began to understand the real meaning of the words poured out by the old artist, who was himself looking at the picture with apparent satisfaction, but without enthusiasm. "I have done better than that!" he seemed to be saying to himself.

"There is life in it," he said aloud; "in that respect my poor master here surpassed himself, but there is some lack of truth in the background. The man lives indeed; he is rising, and will come towards us; but the atmosphere, the sky, the air, the breath of the breeze—you look and feel for them, but they are not there. And then the man himself is, after all, only a man! Ah! but the one man in the world who came direct from the hands of God must have had a something divine about him that is wanting here. Mabuse himself would grind his teeth and say so when he was not drunk."

Poussin looked from the speaker to Porbus, and from Porbus to the speaker, with restless curiosity. He went up to the latter to ask for the name of their host; but the painter laid a finger on his lips with an air of mystery. The young man's interest was excited; he kept silence, but hoped that sooner or later some word might be let fall that would reveal the name of his entertainer. It was evident that he was a man of talent and very wealthy, for Porbus listened to him respectfully, and the vast room was crowded with marvels of art.

A magnificent portrait of a woman, hung against the dark oak panels of the wall, next caught Poussin's attention.

"What a glorious Giorgione!" he cried.

"No," said his host, "it is an early daub of mine——"

"Gramercy! I am in the abode of the god of painting, it seems!" cried Poussin ingenuously.

The old man smiled as if he had long grown familiar with such praise.

"Master Frenhofer!" said Porbus, "do you think you could send me a little of your capital Rhine wine?"

"A couple of pipes!" answered his host; "one to discharge a debt, for the pleasure of seeing your pretty sinner, the other as a present from a friend."

"Ah! if I had my health," returned Porbus, "and if you would but let me see your *Belle Noiseuse*, I would paint some great picture, with breadth in it and depth; the figures should be life-size."

"Let you see my work!" cried the painter in agitation. "No, no! it is not perfect yet; something still remains for me to do. Yesterday, in the dusk," he said, "I thought I had reached the end. Her eyes seemed moist, the flesh quivered, something stirred the tresses of her hair. She breathed! But though I have succeeded in reproducing Nature's roundness and relief on the flat surface of the canvas, this morning, by daylight, I found out my mistake. Ah! to achieve that glorious result I have studied the works of the great masters of color, stripping off coat after coat of color from Titian's canvas, analyzing the pigments of the king of light. Like that sovereign painter, I began the face in a slight tone with a supple and fat paste—for shadow is but an accident; bear that in mind, youngster!—Then I began afresh, and by half-tones and thin glazes of color less and less transparent, I gradually deepened the tints to the deepest black of the strongest shadows. An ordinary painter makes his shadows something entirely different in nature from the high lights; they are wood or brass, or what you will, anything but flesh in shadow. You feel that even if those figures were to alter their position, those shadow

stains would never be cleansed away, those parts of the picture would never glow with light.

"I have escaped one mistake, into which the most famous painters have sometimes fallen; in my canvas the whiteness shines through the densest and most persistent shadow. I have not marked out the limits of my figure in hard, dry outlines, and brought every least anatomical detail into prominence (like a host of dunces, who fancy that they can draw because they can trace a line elaborately smooth and clean), for the human body is not contained within the limits of line. In this the sculptor can approach the truth more nearly than we painters. Nature's way is a complicated succession of curve within curve. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as drawing.—Do not laugh, young man; strange as that speech may seem to you, you will understand the truth in it some day.—A line is a method of expressing the effect of light upon an object; but there are no lines in nature, everything is solid. We draw by modeling, that is to say, that we disengage an object from its setting; the distribution of the light alone gives to a body the appearance by which we know it. So I have not defined the outlines; I have suffused them with a haze of half-tints warm or golden, in such a sort that you cannot lay your finger on the exact spot where background and contours meet. Seen from near, the picture looks a blur; it seems to lack definition; but step back two paces, and the whole thing becomes clear, distinct, and solid; the body stands out, the rounded form comes into relief; you feel that the air plays round it. And yet—I am not satisfied; I have misgivings. Perhaps one ought not to draw a single line; perhaps it would be better to attack the face from the center, taking the highest prominences first, proceeding from them through the whole range of shadows to the heaviest of all. Is not this the method of the sun, the divine painter of the world? Oh, Nature, Nature! who has surprised thee, fugitive? But, after all, too much knowledge, like ignorance, brings you to a negation. I have doubts about my work."

There was a pause. Then the old man spoke again. "I have been at work upon it for ten years, young man; but

what are ten short years in a struggle with Nature? Do we know how long Sir Pygmalion wrought at the one statue that came to life?"

The old man fell into deep musings, and gazed before him with wide unseeing eyes, while he played unheedingly with his knife.

"Look, he is in converse with his *dæmon!*" murmured Porbus.

At the word, Nicolas Poussin felt himself carried away by an unaccountable accession of artist's curiosity. For him the old man, at once intent and inert, the seer with the unseeing eyes, became something more than a man—a fantastic spirit living in a mysterious world, and countless vague thoughts awoke within his soul. The effect of this species of fascination upon his mind can no more be described in words than the passionate longing awakened in an exile's heart by the song that recalls his home. He thought of the scorn that the old man affected to display for the noblest efforts of art, of his wealth, his manners, of the deference paid to him by Porbus. The mysterious picture, the work of patience on which he had wrought so long in secret, was doubtless a work of genius, for the head of the Virgin which young Poussin had admired so frankly was beautiful even beside Mabuse's *Adam*—there was no mistaking the imperial manner of one of the princes of art. Everything combined to set the old man beyond the limits of human nature.

Out of the wealth of fancies in Nicolas Poussin's brain an idea grew, and gathered shape and clearness. He saw in this supernatural being a complete type of the artist nature, a nature mocking and kindly, barren and prolific, an erratic spirit intrusted with great and manifold powers which she too often abuses, leading sober reason, the Philistine, and sometimes even the amateur forth into a stony wilderness where they see nothing; but the white-winged maiden herself, wild as her fancies may be, finds epics there and castles and works of art. For Poussin, the enthusiast, the old man was suddenly transfigured, and became Art incarnate, Art with its mysteries, its vehement passion and its dreams.

"Yes, my dear Porbus," Frenhofer continued, "hitherto I have never found a flawless model, a body with outlines of perfect beauty, the carnations—Ah! where does she live?" he cried, breaking in upon himself, "the undiscoverable Venus of the older time, for whom we have sought so often, only to find the scattered gleams of her beauty here and there? Oh! to behold once and for one moment, Nature grown perfect and divine, the Ideal at last, I would give all that I possess. . . . Nay, Beauty divine, I would go to seek thee in the dim land of the dead; like Orpheus, I would go down into the Hades of Art to bring back the life of art from among the shadows of death."

"We can go now," said Porbus to Poussin. "He neither hears nor sees us any longer."

"Let us go to his studio," said young Poussin, wondering greatly.

"Oh! the old fox takes care that no one shall enter it. His treasures are so carefully guarded that it is impossible for us to come at them. I have not waited for your suggestion and your fancy to attempt to lay hands on this mystery by force."

"So there is a mystery?"

"Yes," answered Porbus. "Old Frenhofer is the only pupil Mabuse would take. Frenhofer became the painter's friend, deliverer, and father; he sacrificed the greater part of his fortune to enable Mabuse to indulge in riotous extravagance, and in return Mabuse bequeathed to him the secret of relief, the power of giving to his figures the wonderful life, the flower of Nature, the eternal despair of art, the secret which Mabuse knew so well that one day when he had sold the flowered brocade suit in which he should have appeared at the Entry of Charles V., he accompanied his master in a suit of paper painted to resemble the brocade. The peculiar richness and splendor of the stuff struck the Emperor; he complimented the old drunkard's patron on the artist's appearance, and so the trick was brought to light. Frenhofer is a passionate enthusiast, who sees above and beyond other painters. He has meditated profoundly on color, and the absolute truth of line; but by the way of much

research he has come to doubt the very existence of the objects of his search. He says, in moments of despondency, that there is no such thing as drawing, and that by means of lines we can only reproduce geometrical figures; but that is overshooting the mark, for by outline and shadow you can reproduce form without any color at all, which shows that our art, like Nature, is composed of an infinite number of elements. Drawing gives you the skeleton, the anatomical framework, and color puts the life into it; but life without the skeleton is even more incomplete than a skeleton without life. But there is something else truer still, and it is this—for painters, practice and observation are everything; and when theories and poetical ideas begin to quarrel with the brushes, the end is doubt, as has happened with our good friend, who is half crack-brained enthusiast, half painter. A sublime painter! but, unluckily for him, he was born to riches, and so he has leisure to follow his fancies. Do not you follow his example! Work! painters have no business to think, except brush in hand."

"We will find a way into his studio!" cried Poussin confidently. He had ceased to heed Porbus's remarks. The other smiled at the young painter's enthusiasm, asked him to come to see him again, and they parted.

Nicolas Poussin went slowly back to the Rue de la Harpe, and passed the modest hostelry where he was lodging without noticing it. A feeling of uneasiness prompted him to hurry up the crazy staircase till he reached a room at the top, a quaint, airy recess under the steep, high-pitched roof common among houses in old Paris. In the one dingy window of the place sat a young girl, who sprang up at once when she heard someone at the door; it was the prompting of love; she had recognized the painter's touch on the latch.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked.

"The matter is . . . is . . . Oh! I have felt that I am a painter! Until to-day I have had doubts, but now I believe in myself! There is the making of a great man in me! Never mind, Gillette, we shall be rich and happy! There is gold at the tips of those brushes——"

He broke off suddenly. The joy faded from his powerful and earnest face as he compared his vast hopes with his slender resources. The walls were covered with sketches in chalk on sheets of common paper. There were but four canvases in the room. Colors were very costly, and the young painter's palette was almost bare. Yet in the midst of his poverty he possessed and was conscious of the possession of inexhaustible treasures of the heart, of a devouring genius equal to all the tasks that lay before him.

He had been brought to Paris by a nobleman among his friends, or perchance by the consciousness of his powers; and in Paris he had found a mistress, one of those noble and generous souls who choose to suffer by a great man's side, who share his struggles and strive to understand his fancies, accepting their lot of poverty and love as bravely and dauntlessly as other women will set themselves to bear the burden of riches and make a parade of their insensibility. The smile that stole over Gillette's lips filled the garret with golden light, and rivaled the brightness of the sun in heaven. The sun, moreover, does not always shine in heaven, whereas Gillette was always in the garret, absorbed in her passion, occupied by Poussin's happiness and sorrow, consoling the genius which found an outlet in love before art engrossed it.

"Listen, Gillette. Come here."

The girl obeyed joyously, and sprang upon the painter's knee. Hers was perfect grace and beauty, and the loveliness of spring; she was adorned with all luxuriant fairness of outward form, lighted up by the glow of a fair soul within.

"Oh! God," he cried; "I shall never dare to tell her——"

"A secret?" she cried; "I must know it!"

Poussin was absorbed in his dreams.

"Do tell it me!"

"Gillette, . . . poor beloved heart! . . ."

"Oh! do you want something of me?"

"Yes."

"If you wish me to sit once more for you as I did the other day," she continued with playful petulance, "I will never consent to do such a thing again, for your eyes say

nothing all the while. You do not think of me at all, and yet you look at me——"

"Would you rather have me draw another woman?"

"Perhaps—if she were very ugly," she said.

"Well," said Poussin gravely, "and if, for the sake of my fame to come, if to make me a great painter, you must sit to someone else?"

"You may try me," she said; "you know quite well that I would not."

Poussin's head sank on her breast; he seemed to be overpowered by some intolerable joy or sorrow.

"Listen," she cried, plucking at the sleeve of Poussin's threadbare doublet. "I told you, Nick, that I would lay down my life for you; but I never promised you that I in my lifetime would lay down my love."

"Your love?" cried the young artist.

"If I showed myself thus to another, you would love me no longer, and I should feel myself unworthy of you. Obedience to your fancies was a natural and simple thing, was it not? Even against my own will, I am glad and even proud to do thy dear will. But for another, out upon it!"

"Forgive me, my Gillette," said the painter, falling upon his knees; "I would rather be beloved than famous. You are fairer than success and honors. There; fling the pencils away, and burn those sketches! I have made a mistake. I was meant to love and not to paint. Perish art and all its secrets!"

Gillette looked admiringly at him, in an ecstasy of happiness! She was triumphant; she felt instinctively that art was laid aside for her sake, and flung like a grain of incense at her feet.

"Yet he is only an old man," Poussin continued; "for him you would be a woman, and nothing more. You—so perfect!"

"I must love you indeed!" she cried, ready to sacrifice even love's scruples to the lover who had given up so much for her sake; "but I should bring about my own ruin. Ah! to ruin myself, to lose everything for you! . . . It is a very

glorious thought! Ah! but you will forget me. Oh! what evil thought is this that has come to you?"

"I love you, and yet I thought of it," he said, with something like remorse. "Am I so base a wretch?"

"Let us consult Père Hardouin," she said.

"No, no! let it be a secret between us."

"Very well; I will do it. But you must not be there," she said. "Stay at the door with your dagger in your hand; and if I call, rush in and kill the painter."

Poussin forgot everything but art. He held Gillette tightly in his arms.

"He loves me no longer!" thought Gillette when she was alone. She repented of her resolution already.

But to these misgivings there soon succeeded a sharper pain, and she strove to banish a hideous thought that arose in her own heart. It seemed to her that her own love had grown less already, with a vague suspicion that the painter had fallen somewhat in her eyes.

II

CATHERINE LESCAULT

Three months after Poussin and Porbus met, the latter went to see Master Frenhofer. The old man had fallen a victim to one of those profound and spontaneous fits of discouragement that are caused, according to medical logicians, by indigestion, flatulence, fever, or enlargement of the spleen; or, if you take the opinion of the Spiritualists, by the imperfections of our moral nature. The good man had simply overworked himself in putting the finishing touches to his mysterious picture. He was lounging in a huge carved oak chair, covered with black leather, and did not change his listless attitude, but glanced at Porbus like a man who has settled down into low spirits.

"Well, master," said Porbus, "was the ultramarine bad that you sent for to Bruges? Is the new white difficult to grind? Is the oil poor, or are the brushes recalcitrant?"

"Alas!" cried the old man, "for a moment I thought that my work was finished; but I am sure that I am mistaken in certain details, and I cannot rest until I have cleared my doubts. I am thinking of traveling. I am going to Turkey, to Greece, to Asia, in quest of a model, so as to compare my picture with the different living forms of Nature. Perhaps," and a smile of contentment stole over his face, "perhaps I have Nature herself up there. At times I am half afraid that a breath may waken her, and that she will escape me."

He rose to his feet as if to set out at once.

"Aha!" said Porbus, "I have come just in time to save you the trouble and expense of a journey."

"What?" asked Frenhofer in amazement.

"Young Poussin is loved by a woman of incomparable and flawless beauty. But, dear master, if he consents to lend her to you, at the least you ought to let us see your work."

The old man stood motionless and completely dazed.

"What!" he cried piteously at last, "show you my creation, my bride? Rend the veil that has kept my happiness sacred? It would be an infamous profanation. For ten years I have lived with her; she is mine, mine alone; she loves me. Has she not smiled at me, at each stroke of the brush upon the canvas? She has a soul—the soul that I have given her. She would blush if any eyes but mine should rest on her. To exhibit her! Where is the husband, the lover so vile as to bring the woman he loves to dishonor? When you paint a picture for the court, you do not put your whole soul into it; to courtiers you sell lay figures duly colored. My painting is no painting, it is a sentiment, a passion. She was born in my studio, there she must dwell in maiden solitude, and only when clad can she issue thence. Poetry and woman only lay the last veil aside for their lovers. Have we Rafael's model, Ariosto's Angelica, Dante's Beatrice? Nay, only their form and semblance. But this picture, locked away above in my studio, is an exception in our art. It is not a canvas, it is a woman—a woman with whom I talk. I share her thoughts, her tears, her laughter. Would you have me fling aside these ten years of happiness

like a cloak? Would you have me cease at once to be father, lover, and creator? She is not a creature, but a creation.

"Bring your young painter here. I will give him my treasures; I will give him pictures by Correggio and Michel Angelo and Titian; I will kiss his footprints in the dust; but—make him my rival! Shame on me. Ah! ah! I am a lover first, and then a painter. Yes, with my latest sigh I could find strength to burn my *Belle Noiseuse;* but—compel her to endure the gaze of a stranger, a young man and a painter!—Ah! no, no! I would kill him on the morrow who should sully her with a glance! Nay, you, my friend, I would kill you with my own hands in a moment if you did not kneel in reverence before her! Now, will you have me submit my idol to the careless eyes and senseless criticisms of fools? Ah! love is a mystery; it can only live hidden in the depths of the heart. You say, even to your friend, 'Behold her whom I love,' and there is an end of love."

The old man seemed to have grown young again; there was light and life in his eyes, and a faint flush of red in his pale face. His hands shook. Porbus was so amazed by the passionate vehemence of Frenhofer's words that he knew not what to reply to this utterance of an emotion as strange as it was profound. Was Frenhofer sane or mad? Had he fallen a victim to some freak of the artist's fancy? or were these ideas of his produced by that strange light-headedness which comes over us during the long travail of a work of art? Would it be possible to come to terms with this singular passion?

Harassed by all these doubts, Porbus spoke—"Is it not woman for woman?" he said. "Does not Poussin submit his mistress to your gaze?"

"What is she?" retorted the other. "A mistress who will be false to him sooner or later. Mine will be faithful to me forever."

"Well, well," said Porbus, "let us say no more about it. But you may die before you will find such flawless beauty as hers, even in Asia, and then your picture will be left unfinished."

"Oh! it is finished," said Frenhofer. "Standing before it

you would think that it was a living woman lying on the velvet couch beneath the shadow of the curtains. Perfumes are burning on a golden tripod by her side. You would be tempted to lay your hand upon the tassel of the cord that holds back the curtains; it would seem to you that you saw her breast rise and fall as she breathed; that you beheld the living Catherine Lescault, the beautiful courtesan whom men called *La Belle Noiseuse*. And yet—if I could but be sure——"

"Then go to Asia," returned Porbus, noticing a certain indecision in Frenhofer's face. And with that Porbus made a few steps towards the door.

By that time Gillette and Nicolas Poussin had reached Frenhofer's house. The girl drew away her arm from her lover's as she stood on the threshold, and shrank back as if some presentiment flashed through her mind.

"Oh! what have I come to do here?" she asked of her lover in low vibrating tones, with her eyes fixed on his.

"Gillette, I have left you to decide; I am ready to obey you in everything. You are my conscience and my glory. Go home again; I shall be happier, perhaps, if you do not——"

"Am I my own when you speak to me like that? No, no; I am like a child.—Come," she added, seemingly with a violent effort; "if our love dies, if I plant a long regret in my heart, your fame will be the reward of my obedience to your wishes, will it not? Let us go in. I shall still live on as a memory on your palette; that shall be life for me afterwards."

The door opened, and the two lovers encountered Porbus, who was surprised by the beauty of Gillette, whose eyes were full of tears. He hurried her, trembling from head to foot, into the presence of the old painter.

"Here!" he cried, "is she not worth all the masterpieces in the world!"

Frenhofer trembled. There stood Gillette in the artless and childlike attitude of some timid and innocent Georgian, carried off by brigands, and confronted with a slave merchant. A shame-fast red flushed her face, her eyes drooped,

her hands hung by her side, her strength seemed to have failed her, her tears protested against this outrage. Poussin cursed himself in despair that he should have brought his fair treasure from its hiding-place. The lover overcame the artist, and countless doubts assailed Poussin's heart when he saw youth dawn in the old man's eyes, as, like a painter, he discerned every line of the form hidden beneath the young girl's vesture. Then the lover's savage jealousy awoke.

"Gillette!" he cried, "let us go."

The girl turned joyously at the cry and the tone in which it was uttered, raised her eyes to his, looked at him, and fled to his arms.

"Ah! then you love me," she cried; "you love me!" and she burst into tears.

She had spirit enough to suffer in silence, but she had no strength to hide her joy.

"Oh! leave her with me for one moment," said the old painter, "and you shall compare her with my *Catherine* . . . yes—I consent."

Frenhofer's words likewise came from him like a lover's cry. His vanity seemed to be engaged for his semblance of womanhood; he anticipated the triumph of the beauty of his own creation over the beauty of the living girl.

"Do not give him time to change his mind!" cried Porbus, striking Poussin on the shoulder. "The flower of love soon fades, but the flower of art is immortal."

"Then am I only a woman now for him?" said Gillette. She was watching Poussin and Porbus closely.

She raised her head proudly; she glanced at Frenhofer, and her eyes flashed; then as she saw how her lover had fallen again to gazing at the portrait which he had taken at first for a Giorgione—

"Ah!" she cried; "let us go up to the studio. He never gave me such a look."

The sound of her voice recalled Poussin from his dreams.

"Old man," he said, "do you see this blade? I will plunge it into your heart at the first cry from this young girl; I will set fire to your house, and no one shall leave it alive. Do you understand?"

Nicolas Poussin scowled, every word was a menace. Gillette took comfort from the young painter's bearing, and yet more from that gesture, and almost forgave him for sacrificing her to his art and his glorious future.

Porbus and Poussin stood at the door of the studio and looked at each other in silence. At first the painter of the Saint Mary of Egypt hazarded some exclamations: "Ah! she has taken off her clothes; he told her to come into the light —he is comparing the two!" but the sight of the deep distress in Poussin's face suddenly silenced him; and though old painters no longer feel these scruples, so petty in the presence of art, he admired them because they were so natural and gracious in the lover. The young man kept his hand on the hilt of his dagger, and his ear was almost glued to the door. The two men standing in the shadow might have been conspirators waiting for the hour when they might strike down a tyrant.

"Come in, come in," cried the old man. He was radiant with delight. "My work is perfect. I can show her now with pride. Never shall painter, brushes, colors, light, and canvas produce a rival for *Catherine Lescault*, the beautiful courtesan!"

Porbus and Poussin, burning with eager curiosity, hurried into a vast studio. Everything was in disorder and covered with dust, but they saw a few pictures here and there upon the wall. They stopped first of all in admiration before the life-sized figure of a woman partially draped.

"Oh! never mind that," said Frenhofer; "that is a rough daub that I made, a study, a pose, it is nothing. These are my failures," he went on, indicating the enchanting compositions upon the walls of the studio.

This scorn for such works of art struck Porbus and Poussin dumb with amazement. They looked round for the picture of which he had spoken, and could not discover it.

"Look here!" said the old man. His hair was disordered, his face aglow with a more than human exaltation, his eyes glittered, he breathed hard like a young lover frenzied by love.

"Aha!" he cried, "you did not expect to see such per-

fection! You are looking for a picture, and you see a woman before you. There is such depth in that canvas, the atmosphere is so true that you cannot distinguish it from the air that surrounds us. Where is art? Art has vanished, it is invisible! It is the form of a living girl that you see before you. Have I not caught the very hues of life, the spirit of the living line that defies the figure? Is there not the effect produced there like that which all natural objects present in the atmosphere about them, or fishes in the water? Do you see how the figure stands out against the background? Does it not seem to you that you could pass your hand along the back? But then for seven years I studied and watched how the daylight blends with the objects on which it falls. And the hair, the light pours over it like a flood, does it not? . . . Ah! she breathed, I am sure that she breathed! Her breast—ah, see! Who would not fall on his knees before her? Her pulses throb. She will rise to her feet. Wait!"

"Do you see anything?" Poussin asked of Porbus.

"No . . . do you?"

"I see nothing."

The two painters left the old man to his ecstasy, and tried to ascertain whether the light that fell full upon the canvas had in some way neutralized all the effect for them. They moved to the right and left of the picture; then they came in front, bending down and standing upright by turns.

"Yes, yes, it is really canvas," said Frenhofer, who mistook the nature of this minute investigation.

"Look! the canvas is on a stretcher, here is the easel; indeed, here are my colors, my brushes," and he took up a brush and held it out to them, all unsuspicious of their thought.

"The old *lansquenet* is laughing at us," said Poussin, coming once more towards the supposed picture. "I can see nothing there but confused masses of color and a multitude of fantastical lines that go to make a dead wall of paint."

"We are mistaken, look!" said Porbus.

In a corner of the canvas as they came nearer, they distinguished a bare foot emerging from the chaos of color,

half-tints and vague shadows that made up a dim formless fog. Its living delicate beauty held them spell-bound. This fragment that had escaped an incomprehensible, slow, and gradual destruction seemed to them like the Parian marble torso of some Venus emerging from the ashes of a ruined town.

"There is a woman beneath," exclaimed Porbus, calling Poussin's attention to the coats of paint with which the old artist had overlaid and concealed his work in the quest of perfection.

Both artists turned involuntarily to Frenhofer. They began to have some understanding, vague though it was, of the ecstasy in which he lived.

"He believes it in all good faith," said Porbus.

"Yes, my friend," said the old man, rousing himself from his dreams, "it needs faith, faith in art, and you must live for long with your work to produce such a creation. What toil some of those shadows have cost me. Look! there is a faint shadow there upon the cheek beneath the eyes—if you saw that on a human face, it would seem to you that you could never render it with paint. Do you think that that effect has not cost unheard-of toil?

"But not only so, dear Porbus. Look closely at my work, and you will understand more clearly what I was saying as to methods of modeling and outline. Look at the high lights on the bosom, and see how by touch on touch, thickly laid on, I have raised the surface so that it catches the light itself and blends it with the lustrous whiteness of the high lights, and how by an opposite process, by flattening the surface of the paint, and leaving no trace of the passage of the brush, I have succeeded in softening the contours of my figure and enveloping them in half-tints until the very idea of drawing, of the means by which the effect is produced, fades away, and the picture has the roundness and relief of nature. Come closer. You will see the manner of working better; at a little distance it cannot be seen. There! Just there, it is, I think, very plainly to be seen," and with the tip of his brush he pointed out a patch of transparent color to the two painters.

Porbus, laying a hand on the old artist's shoulder, turned to Poussin with a "Do you know that in him we see a very great painter?"

"He is even more of a poet than a painter," Poussin answered gravely.

"There," Porbus continued, as he touched the canvas, "lies the utmost limit of our art on earth."

"Beyond that point it loses itself in the skies," said Poussin.

"What joys lie there on that piece of canvas!" exclaimed Porbus.

The old man, deep in his own musings, smiled at the woman he alone beheld, and did not hear.

"But sooner or later he will find out that there is nothing there!" cried Poussin.

"Nothing on my canvas!" said Frenhofer, looking in turn at either painter and at his picture.

"What have you done?" muttered Porbus, turning to Poussin.

The old man clutched the young painter's arm and said, "Do you see nothing? clodpate! Huguenot! varlet! scullion! What brought you here into my studio?—My good Porbus," he went on, as he turned to the painter, "are you also making a fool of me? Answer! I am your friend. Tell me, have I ruined my picture after all?"

Porbus hesitated and said nothing, but there was such intolerable anxiety in the old man's white face that he pointed to the easel.

"Look!" he said.

Frenhofer looked for a moment at his picture, and staggered back.

"Nothing! nothing! After ten years of work . . ."

He sat down and wept.

"So I am a dotard, a madman, I have neither talent nor power! I am only a rich man, who works for his own pleasure, and makes no progress. I have done nothing after all!"

He looked through his tears at his picture. Suddenly he rose and stood proudly before the two painters.

"By the body and blood of Christ," he cried with flashing eyes, "you are jealous! You would have me think that my picture is a failure because you want to steal her from me! Ah! I see her, I see her," he cried, "she is marvelously beautiful . . ."

At that moment Poussin heard the sound of weeping; Gillette was crouching forgotten in a corner. All at once the painter once more became the lover. "What is it, my angel?" he asked her.

"Kill me!" she sobbed. "I must be a vile thing if I love you still, for I despise you. . . . I admire you, and I loathe you! I love you, and I feel that I hate you even now."

While Gillette's words sounded in Poussin's ears, Frenhofer drew a green serge covering over his *Catherine* with the sober deliberation of a jeweler who locks his drawers when he suspects his visitors to be expert thieves. He gave the two painters a profoundly astute glance that expressed to the full his suspicion and his contempt for them, saw them out of his studio with impetuous haste and in silence, until from the threshold of his house he bade them "Good-by, my young friends!"

That farewell struck a chill of dread into the two painters. Porbus, in anxiety, went again on the morrow to see Frenhofer, and learned that he had died in the night after burning his canvases.

PARIS, *February* 1832.

LOUIS LAMBERT

[*Louis Lambert* appeared first—as *Notice Biographique sur L. L.*—in 1832 in the *Nouveaux Contes Philosophiques;* then in February 1833 as a small volume by itself, a good deal enlarged, and entitled *Le Livre Mystique*, published by Werdet in 1835. In 1842, it was again published by Charpentier, and in 1846 it joined the *Comédie.*]

LOUIS LAMBERT

DEDICATION:

"Et nunc et semper dilectæ dicatum."

LOUIS LAMBERT was born in 1797 at Montoire, a little town in the Vendômois, where his father owned a tannery of no great magnitude, and intended that his son should succeed him; but his precocious bent for study modified the paternal decision. For, indeed, the tanner and his wife adored Louis, their only child, and never contradicted him in anything.

At the age of five Louis had begun by reading the Old and New Testaments; and these two Books, including so many books, had sealed his fate. Could that childish imagination understand the mystical depths of the Scriptures? Could it so early follow the flight of the Holy Spirit across the worlds? Or was it merely attracted by the romantic touches which abound in those Oriental poems! Our narrative will answer these questions to some readers.

One thing resulted from this first reading of the Bible: Louis went all over Montoire begging for books, and he obtained them by those winning ways peculiar to children, which no one can resist. While devoting himself to these studies under no sort of guidance, he reached the age of ten.

At that period substitutes for the army were scarce; rich families secured them long beforehand to have them ready when the lots were drawn. The poor tanner's modest fortune did not allow of their purchasing a substitute for their son, and they saw no means allowed by law for evading the conscription but that of making him a priest; so, in 1807, they sent him to his maternal uncle, the parish priest of Mer, another small town on the Loire, not far from Blois. This arrangement at once satisfied Louis's passion for knowledge, and his parents' wish not to expose him to the dreadful

chances of war; and, indeed, his taste for study and precocious intelligence gave grounds for hoping that he might rise to high fortunes in the Church.

After remaining for about three years with his uncle, an old and not uncultured Oratorian, Louis left him early in 1811 to enter the college at Vendôme, where he was maintained at the cost of Madame de Staël.

Lambert owed the favor and patronage of this celebrated lady to chance, or shall we not say to Providence, who can smooth the path of forlorn genius. To us, indeed, who do not see below the surface of human things, such vicissitudes, of which we find many examples in the lives of great men, appear to be merely the result of physical phenomena; to most biographers the head of a man of genius rises above the herd as some noble plant in the fields attracts the eye of the botanist by its splendor. This comparison may well be applied to Louis Lambert's adventure; he was accustomed to spend the time allowed him by his uncle for holidays at his father's house; but instead of indulging, after the manner of schoolboys, in the sweets of the delightful *far niente* that tempts us at every age, he set out every morning with part of a loaf and his books, and went to read and meditate in the woods, to escape his mother's remonstrances, for she believed such persistent study to be injurious. How admirable is a mother's instinct! From that time reading was in Louis a sort of appetite which nothing could satisfy; he devoured books of every kind, feeding indiscriminately on religious works, history, philosophy, and physics. He has told me that he found indescribable delight in reading dictionaries for lack of other books, and I readily believed him. What scholar has not many a time found pleasure in seeking the probable meaning of some unknown word? The analysis of a word, its physiognomy and history, would be to Lambert matter for long dreaming. But these were not the instinctive dreams by which a boy accustoms himself to the phenomena of life, steels himself to every moral or physical perception—an involuntary education which subsequently brings forth fruit both in the understanding and character of a man; no, Louis mastered the facts, and he accounted for them after

seeking out both the principle and the end with the mother wit of a savage. Indeed, from the age of fourteen, by one of those startling freaks in which nature sometimes indulges, and which proved how anomalous was his temperament, he would utter quite simply ideas of which the depth was not revealed to me till a long time after.

"Often," he has said to me when speaking of his studies, "often have I made the most delightful voyage, floating on a word down the abyss of the past like an insect embarked on a blade of grass tossing on the ripples of a stream. Starting from Greece, I would get to Rome, and traverse the whole extent of modern ages. What a fine book might be written of the life and adventures of a word! It has, of course, received various stamps from the occasions on which it has served its purpose; it has conveyed different ideas in different places; but is it not still grander to think of it under the three aspects of soul, body, and motion? Merely to regard it in the abstract, apart from its functions, its effects, and its influence, is enough to cast one into an ocean of meditations. Are not most words colored by the idea they represent? Then, to whose genius are they due? If it takes great intelligence to create a word, how old may human speech be? The combination of letters, their shapes, and the look they give to the word, are the exact reflection, in accordance with the character of each nation, of the unknown beings whose traces survive in us.

"Who can philosophically explain the transition from sensation to thought, from thought to word, from the word to its hieroglyphic presentment, from hieroglyphics to the alphabet, from the alphabet to written language, of which the eloquent beauty resides in a series of images, classified by rhetoric, and forming, in a sense, the hieroglyphics of thought? Was it not the ancient mode of representing human ideas as embodied in the forms of animals that gave rise to the shapes of the first signs used in the East for writing down language? Then has it not left its traces by tradition on our modern languages, which have all seized some remnant of the primitive speech of nations, a majestic and solemn tongue whose grandeur and solemnity decrease as communities

grow old; whose sonorous tones ring in the Hebrew Bible, and still are noble in Greece, but grow weaker under the progress of successive phases of civilization?

"Is it to this time-honored spirit that we owe the mysteries lying buried in every human word? In the word *True* do we not discern a certain imaginary rectitude? Does not the compact brevity of its sound suggest a vague image of chaste nudity and the simplicity of Truth in all things? The syllable seems to me singularly crisp and fresh.

"I chose the formula of an abstract idea on purpose, not wishing to illustrate the case by a word which should make it too obvious to the apprehension, as the word *Flight* for instance, which is a direct appeal to the senses.

"But is it not so with every root word? They all are stamped with a living power that comes from the soul, and which they restore to the soul through the mysterious and wonderful action and reaction between thought and speech. Might we not speak of it as a lover who finds on his mistress's lips as much love as he gives? Thus, by their mere physiognomy, words call to life in our brain the beings which they serve to clothe. Like all beings, there is but one place where their properties are at full liberty to act and develop. But the subject demands a science to itself perhaps!"

And he would shrug his shoulders, as much as to say, "But we are too high and too low!"

Louis's passion for reading had on the whole been very well satisfied. The curé of Mer had two or three thousand volumes. This treasure had been derived from the plunder committed during the Revolution in the neighboring châteaux and abbeys. As a priest who had taken the oath, the worthy man had been able to choose the best books from among these precious libraries, which were sold by the pound. In three years Louis Lambert had assimilated the contents of all the books in his uncle's library that were worth reading. The process of absorbing ideas by means of reading had become in him a very strange phenomenon. His eye took in six or seven lines at once, and his mind grasped the sense with a swiftness as remarkable as that of his eye; sometimes even one

word in a sentence was enough to enable him to seize the gist of the matter.

His memory was prodigious. He remembered with equal exactitude the ideas he had derived from reading, and those which had occurred to him in the course of meditation or conversation. Indeed, he had every form of memory—for places, for names, for words, things, and faces. He not only recalled any object at will, but he saw them in his mind, situated, lighted, and colored as he had originally seen them. And this power he could exert with equal effect with regard to the most abstract efforts of the intellect. He could remember, as he said, not merely the position of a sentence in the book where he had met with it, but the frame of mind he had been in at remote dates. Thus his was the singular privilege of being able to retrace in memory the whole life and progress of his mind, from the ideas he had first acquired to the last thought evolved in it, from the most obscure to the clearest. His brain, accustomed in early youth to the mysterious mechanism by which human faculties are concentrated, drew from this rich treasury endless images full of life and freshness, on which he fed his spirit during those lucid spells of contemplation.

"Whenever I wish it," said he to me in his own language, to which a fund of remembrance gave precocious originality, "I can draw a veil over my eyes. Then I suddenly see within me a camera obscura, where natural objects are reproduced in purer forms than those under which they first appeared to my external sense."

At the age of twelve his imagination, stimulated by the perpetual exercise of his faculties, had developed to a point which permitted him to have such precise concepts of things which he knew only from reading about them, that the image stamped on his mind could not have been clearer if he had actually seen them, whether this was by a process of analogy or that he was gifted with a sort of second sight by which he could command all nature.

"When I read the story of the battle of Austerlitz," said he to me one day, "I saw every incident. The roar of the cannon, the cries of the fighting men rang in my ears, and

made my inmost self quiver; I could smell the powder; I heard the clatter of horses and the voices of men; I looked down on the plain where armed nations were in collision, just as if I had been on the heights of Santon. The scene was as terrifying as a passage from the Apocalypse." On the occasions when he brought all his powers into play, and in some degree lost consciousness of his physical existence, and lived on only by the remarkable energy of his mental powers, whose sphere was enormously expanded, he left space behind him, to use his own words.

But I will not here anticipate the intellectual phases of his life. Already, in spite of myself, I have reversed the order in which I ought to tell the history of this man, who transferred all his activities to thinking, as others throw all their life into action.

A strong bias drew his mind to mystical studies.

"*Abyssus abyssum,*" he would say. "Our spirit is abysmal and loves the abyss. In childhood, manhood, and old age, we are always eager for mysteries in whatever form they present themselves."

This predilection was disastrous; if indeed his life can be measured by ordinary standards, or if we may gauge another's happiness by our own or by social notions. This taste for the "things of heaven," another phrase he was fond of using, this *mens divinior,* was due perhaps to the influence produced on his mind by the first books he read at his uncle's. Saint-Theresa and Madame Guyon were a sequel to the Bible; they had the firstfruits of his manly intelligence, and accustomed him to those swift reactions of the soul of which ecstasy is at once the result and the means. This line of study, this peculiar taste, elevated his heart, purified, ennobled it, gave him an appetite for the divine nature, and suggested to him the almost womanly refinement of feeling which is instinctive in great men; perhaps their sublime superiority is no more than the desire to devote themselves which characterizes woman, only transferred to the greatest things.

As a result of these early impressions, Louis passed immaculate through his school life; this beautiful virginity of

the senses naturally resulted in the richer fervor of his blood, and in increased faculties of mind.

The Baroness de Staël, forbidden to come within forty leagues of Paris, spent several months of her banishment on an estate near Vendôme. One day, when out walking, she met on the skirts of the park the tanner's son, almost in rags, and absorbed in reading. The book was a translation of *Heaven and Hell.* At that time M. Saint-Martin, M. de Gence, and a few other French or half-German writers were almost the only persons in the French Empire to whom the name of Swedenborg was known. Mme. de Staël, greatly surprised, took the book from him with the roughness she affected in her questions, looks, and manners, and with a keen glance at Lambert,—

"Do you understand all this?" she asked.

"Do you pray to God?" said the child.

"Why? yes!"

"And do you understand Him?"

The Baroness was silent for a moment; then she sat down by Lambert, and began to talk to him. Unfortunately, my memory, though retentive, is far from being so trustworthy as my friend's, and I have forgotten the whole of the dialogue excepting those first words.

Such a meeting was of a kind to strike Mme. de Staël very greatly; on her return home she said but little about it, notwithstanding an effusiveness which in her became mere loquacity; but it evidently occupied her thoughts.

The only person now living who preserves any recollection of the incident, and whom I catechised to be informed of what few words Mme. de Staël had let drop, could with difficulty recall these words spoken by the Baroness as describing Lambert, "He is a real seer."

Louis failed to justify in the eyes of the world the high hopes he had inspired in his protectress. The transient favor she showed him was regarded as a feminine caprice, one of the fancies characteristic of artist souls. Mme. de Staël determined to save Louis Lambert alike from serving the Emperor or the Church, and to preserve him for the glorious destiny which, she thought, awaited him; for she

made him out to be a second Moses snatched from the waters. Before her departure she instructed a friend of hers, M. de Corbigny, to send her Moses in due course to the High School at Vendôme; then she probably forgot him.

Having entered this college at the age of fourteen, early in 1811, Lambert would leave it at the end of 1814, when he had finished the course of Philosophy. I doubt whether during the whole time he ever heard a word of his benefactress —if indeed it was the act of a benefactress to pay for a lad's schooling for three years without a thought of his future prospects, after diverting him from a career in which he might have found happiness. The circumstances of the time, and Louis Lambert's character, may to a great extent absolve Mme. de Staël for her thoughtlessness and her generosity. The gentleman who was to have kept up communications between her and the boy left Blois just at the time when Louis passed out of the college. The political events that ensued were then a sufficient excuse for this gentleman's neglect of the Baroness's protégé. The authoress of *Corinne* heard no more of her little Moses.

A hundred louis, which she placed in the hands of M. de Corbigny, who died, I believe, in 1812, was not a sufficiently large sum to leave lasting memories in Mme. de Staël, whose excitable nature found ample pasture during the vicissitudes of 1814 and 1815, which absorbed all her interest.

At this time Louis Lambert was at once too proud and too poor to go in search of a patroness who was traveling all over Europe. However, he went on foot from Blois to Paris in the hope of seeing her, and arrived, unluckily, on the very day of her death. Two letters from Lambert to the Baroness remained unanswered. The memory of Mme. de Staël's good intentions with regard to Louis remains, therefore, only in some few young minds, struck, as mine was, by the strangeness of the story.

No one who had not gone through the training at our college could understand the effect usually made on our minds by the announcement that a "new boy" had arrived, or

the impression that such an adventure as Louis Lambert's was calculated to produce.

And here a little information must be given as to the primitive administration of this institution, originally half-military and half-monastic, to explain the new life which there awaited Lambert. Before the Revolution, the Oratorians, devoted, like the Society of Jesus, to the education of youth—succeeding the Jesuits, in fact, in certain of their establishments—had various provincial houses, of which the most famous were the colleges of Vendôme, of Tournon, of la Flèche, Pont-Levoy, Sorrèze, and Juilly. That at Vendôme, like the others, I believe, turned out a certain number of cadets for the army. The abolition of educational bodies, decreed by the Convention, had but little effect on the college at Vendôme. When the first crisis had blown over, the authorities recovered possession of their buildings; certain Oratorians, scattered about the country, came back to the college and re-opened it under the old rules, with the habits, practices, and customs which gave this school a character with which I have seen nothing at all comparable in any that I have visited since I left that establishment.

Standing in the heart of the town, on the little river Loir which flows under its walls, the college possesses extensive precincts, carefully inclosed by walls, and including all the buildings necessary for an institution on that scale: a chapel, a theater, an infirmary, a bakehouse, gardens, and water supply. This college is the most celebrated home of learning in all the central provinces, and receives pupils from them and from the colonies. Distance prohibits any frequent visits from parents to their children.

The rule of the House forbids holidays away from it. Once entered there, a pupil never leaves till his studies are finished. With the exception of walks taken under the guidance of the Fathers, everything is calculated to give the school the benefit of conventual discipline; in my day the tawse was still a living memory, and the classical leather strap played its terrible part with all the honors. The punishments originally invented by the Society of Jesus, as alarm-

ing to the moral as to the physical man, were still in force in all the integrity of the original code.

Letters to parents were obligatory on certain days, so was confession. Thus our sins and our sentiments were all according to pattern. Everything bore the stamp of monastic rule. I well remember, among other relics of the ancient order, the inspection we went through every Sunday. We were all in our best, placed in file like soldiers to await the arrival of the two inspectors who, attended by the tutors and the tradesmen, examined us from the three points of view, of dress, health, and morals.

The two or three hundred pupils lodged in the establishment were divided, according to ancient custom, into the *minimes* (the smallest), the little boys, the middle boys, and the big boys. The division of the *minimes* included the eighth and seventh classes; the little boys formed the sixth, fifth, and fourth; the middle boys were classed as third and second; and the first class comprised the senior students—of philosophy, rhetoric, the higher mathematics, and chemistry. Each of these divisions had its own buildings, classrooms, and playground, in the large common precincts on to which the classrooms opened, and beyond which was the refectory.

This dining-hall, worthy of an ancient religious Order, accommodated all the school. Contrary to the usual practice in educational institutions, we were allowed to talk at our meals, a tolerant Oratorian rule which enabled us to exchange plates according to our taste. This gastronomical barter was always one of the chief pleasures of our college life. If one of the " middle " boys at the head of his table wished for a helping of lentils instead of dessert—for we had dessert —the offer was passed down from one to another: " Dessert for lentils! " till some other epicure had accepted, then the plate of lentils was passed up to the bidder from hand to hand, and the plate of dessert returned by the same road. Mistakes were never made. If several identical offers were made, they were taken in order, and the formula would be, " Lentils number one for dessert number one." The tables were very long; our incessant barter kept everything moving; we transacted it with amazing eagerness; and the chatter of

three hundred lads, the bustling to and fro of the servants employed in changing the plates, setting down the dishes, handing the bread, with the tours of inspection of the masters, made this refectory at Vendôme a scene unique in its way, and the amazement of visitors.

To make our life more tolerable, deprived as we were of all communication with the outer world and of family affection, we were allowed to keep pigeons and to have gardens. Our two or three hundred pigeon houses, with a thousand birds nesting all round the outer wall, and above thirty garden plots, were a sight even stranger than our meals. But a full account of the peculiarities which made the college at Vendôme a place unique in itself and fertile in reminiscences to those who spent their boyhood there, would be weariness to the reader. Which of us all but remembers with delight, notwithstanding the bitterness of learning, the eccentric pleasures of that cloistered life? The sweetmeats purchased by stealth in the course of our walks, permission obtained to play cards and devise theatrical performances during the holidays, such tricks and freedom as were necessitated by our seclusion; then again, our military band, a relic of the cadets; our academy, our chaplain, our Father professors, and all our games permitted or prohibited, as the case might be; the cavalry charges on stilts, the long slides made in winter, the clatter of our clogs; and, above all, the trading transactions with "the shop" set up in the courtyard itself.

This shop was kept by a sort of cheap-jack, of whom big and little boys could procure—according to his prospectus —boxes, stilts, tools, Jacobin pigeons, and Nuns, Mass-books—an article in small demand—penknives, paper, pens, pencils, ink of all colors, balls and marbles; in short, the whole catalogue of the most treasured possessions of boys, including everything from sauce for the pigeons we were obliged to kill off, to the earthenware pots in which we set aside the rice from supper to be eaten at next morning's breakfast. Which of us is so unhappy as to have forgotten how his heart beat at the sight of this booth, open periodically during play-hours on Sundays, to which we went, each in his turn, to spend his little pocket-money; while the small-

ness of the sum allowed by our parents for these minor pleasures required us to make a choice among all the objects that appealed so strongly to our desires? Did ever a young wife, to whom her husband, during the first days of happiness, hands, twelve times a year, a purse of gold, the budget of her personal fancies, dream of so many different purchases, each of which would absorb the whole sum, as we imagined possible on the eve of the first Sunday in each month? For six francs during one night we owned every delight of that inexhaustible shop! and during Mass every response we chanted was mixed up in our minds with our secret calculations. Which of us all can recollect ever having had a sou left to spend on the Sunday following? And which of us but obeyed the instinctive law of social existence by pitying, helping, and despising those pariahs who, by the avarice or poverty of their parents, found themselves penniless?

Anyone who forms a clear idea of this huge college, with its monastic buildings in the heart of a little town, and the four plots in which we were distributed as by a monastic rule, will easily conceive of the excitement that we felt at the arrival of a new boy, a passenger suddenly embarked on the ship. No young duchess, on her first appearance at Court, was ever more spitefully criticised than the new boy by the youths in his division. Usually during the evening play-hour before prayers, those sycophants who were accustomed to ingratiate themselves with the Fathers who took it in turns two and two for a week to keep an eye on us, would be the first to hear on trustworthy authority: "There will be a new boy to-morrow!" and then suddenly the shout, "A New Boy!—A New Boy!" rang through the courts. We hurried up to crowd round the superintendent and pester him with questions—

"Where was he coming from? What was his name? Which class would he be in?" and so forth.

Louis Lambert's advent was the subject of a romance worthy of the *Arabian Nights*. I was in the fourth class at the time—among the little boys. Our housemasters were two men whom we called Fathers from habit and tradition, though they were not priests. In my time there were indeed but three

genuine Oratorians to whom this title legitimately belonged; in 1814 they all left the college which had gradually become secularized, to find occupation about the altar in various country parishes, like the curé of Mer.

Father Haugoult, the master for the week, was not a bad man, but of very moderate attainments, and he lacked the tact which is indispensable for discerning the different characters of children, and graduating their punishment to their powers of resistance. Father Haugoult, then, began very obligingly to communicate to his pupils the wonderful events which were to end on the morrow in the advent of the most singular of "new boys." Games were at an end. All the children came round in silence to hear the story of Louis Lambert, discovered, like an aërolite, by Mme. de Staël, in a corner of the wood. M. Haugoult had to tell us all about Mme. de Staël ; that evening she seemed to me ten feet high; I saw at a later time the picture of "Corinne," in which Gérard represents her as so tall and handsome; and, alas! the woman painted by my imagination so far transcended this, that the real Mme. de Staël fell at once in my estimation, even after I read her book of really masculine power, *De l'Allemagne*.

But Lambert at that time was an even greater wonder. M. Mareschal, the headmaster, after examining him, had thought of placing him among the senior boys. It was Louis's ignorance of Latin that placed him so low as the fourth class, but he would certainly leap up a class every year; and, as a remarkable exception, he was to be one of the "Academy." *Proh pudor!* we were to have the honor of counting among the "little boys" one whose coat was adorned with the red ribbon displayed by the "Academicians" of Vendôme. These Academicians enjoyed distinguished privileges; they often dined at the director's table, and held two literary meetings annually, at which we were all present to hear their elucubrations. An Academician was a great man in embryo. And if every Vendôme scholar would speak the truth, he would confess that, in later life, an Academician of the great French Academy seemed to him far less remarkable than the stupendous boy who wore the cross and the imposing red ribbon which were the insignia of our "Academy."

It was very unusual to be one of that illustrious body before attaining to the second class, for the Academicians were expected to hold public meetings every Thursday during the holidays, and to read tales in verse or prose, epistles, essays, tragedies, dramas—compositions far above the intelligence of the lower classes. I long treasured the memory of a story called the "Green Ass," which was, I think, the masterpiece of this unknown Society. In the fourth, and an Academician! This boy of fourteen, a poet already, the protégé of Mme. de Staël, a coming genius, said Father Haugoult, was to be one of us! a wizard, a youth capable of writing a composition or a translation while we were being called in to lessons, and of learning his lessons by reading them through but once. Louis Lambert bewildered all our ideas. And Father Haugoult's curiosity and impatience to see this new boy added fuel to our excited fancy.

"If he has pigeons, he can have no pigeon-house; there is not room for another. Well, it cannot be helped," said one boy, since famous as an agriculturist.

"Who will sit next to him?" said another.

"Oh, I wish I might be his chum!" cried an enthusiast.

In school language, the word here rendered chum—*faisant*, or, in some schools, *copin*—expressed a fraternal sharing of the joys and evils of your childish existence, a community of interests that was fruitful of squabbling and making friends again, a treaty of alliance offensive and defensive. It is strange, but never in my time did I know brothers who were chums. If man lives by his feelings, he thinks perhaps that he will make his life the poorer if he merges an affection of his own choosing in a natural tie.

The impression made upon me by Father Haugoult's harangue that evening is one of the most vivid reminiscences of my childhood; I can compare it with nothing but my first reading of *Robinson Crusoe*. Indeed, I owe to my recollection of these prodigious impressions an observation that may perhaps be new as to the different sense attached to words by each hearer. The word in itself has no final meaning; we affect a word more than it affects us; its value is in relation to the images we have assimilated and grouped round it;

but a study of this fact would require considerable elaboration, and lead us too far from our immediate subject.

Not being able to sleep, I had a long discussion with my next neighbor in the dormitory as to the remarkable being who on the morrow was to be one of us. This neighbor, who became an officer, and is now a writer with lofty philosophical views, Barchou de Penhoën, has not been false to his predestination, nor to the hazard of fortune by which the only two scholars of Vendôme, of whose fame Vendôme ever hears, were brought together in the same classroom, on the same form, and under the same roof. Our comrade Dufaure had not, when this book was published, made his appearance in public life as a lawyer. The translator of Fichte, the expositor and friend of Ballanche, was already interested, as I myself was, in metaphysical questions; we often talked nonsense together about God, ourselves, and nature. He at that time affected pyrrhonism. Jealous of his place as leader, he doubted Lambert's precocious gifts; while I, having lately read *Les Enfants Célèbres*, overwhelmed him with evidence, quoting young Montcalm, Pico della Mirandola, Pascal—in short, a score of early developed brains, anomalies that are famous in the history of the human mind, and Lambert's predecessors.

I was at the time passionately addicted to reading. My father, who was ambitious to see me in the École Polytechnique, paid for me to have a special course of private lessons in mathematics. My mathematical master was the librarian of the college, and allowed me to help myself to books without much caring what I chose to take from the library, a quiet spot where I went to him during play-hours to have my lesson. Either he was no great mathematician, or he was absorbed in some grand scheme, for he very willingly left me to read when I ought to have been learning, while he worked at I knew not what. So, by a tacit understanding between us, I made no complaints of being taught nothing, and he said nothing of the books I borrowed.

Carried away by this ill-timed mania, I neglected my studies to compose poems, which certainly can have shown no great promise, to judge by a line of too many feet which became

famous among my companions—the beginning of an epic on the Incas—

"O Inca! O roi infortuné et malheureux!"

In derision of such attempts, I was nicknamed the Poet, but mockery did not cure me. I was always rhyming, in spite of good advice from M. Mareschal, the headmaster, who tried to cure me of an unfortunately inveterate passion by telling me the fable of a linnet that fell out of the nest because it tried to fly before its wings were grown. I persisted in my reading; I became the least emulous, the idlest, the most dreamy of all the division of "little boys," and consequently the most frequently punished.

This autobiographical digression may give some idea of the reflections I was led to make in anticipation of Lambert's arrival. I was then twelve years old. I felt sympathy from the first for the boy whose temperament had some points of likeness to my own. I was at last to have a companion in daydreams and meditations. Though I knew not yet what glory meant, I thought it glory to be the familiar friend of a child whose immortality was foreseen by Mme. de Staël. To me Louis Lambert was as a giant.

The looked-for morrow came at last. A minute before breakfast we heard the steps of M. Mareschal and of the new boy in the quiet courtyard. Every head was turned at once to the door of the classroom. Father Haugoult, who participated in our torments of curiosity, did not sound the whistle he used to reduce our mutterings to silence and bring us back to our tasks. We then saw this famous new boy, whom M. Mareschal was leading by the hand. The superintendent descended from his desk, and the headmaster said to him solemnly, according to etiquette: "Monsieur, I have brought you M. Louis Lambert; will you place him in the fourth class, he will begin work to-morrow."

Then, after speaking a few words in an undertone to the class-master, he said—

"Where can he sit?"

It would have been unfair to displace one of us for a

newcomer; so as there was but one desk vacant, Louis Lambert came to fill it, next to me, for I had last joined the class. Though we still had some time to wait before lessons were over, we all stood up to look at Louis Lambert. M. Mareschal heard our mutterings, saw how eager we were, and said, with the kindness that endeared him to us all—

"Well, well, but make no noise; do not disturb the other classes."

These words set us free to play some little time before breakfast, and we all gathered round Lambert while M. Mareschal walked up and down the courtyard with Father Haugoult.

There were about eighty of us little demons, as bold as birds of prey. Though we ourselves had all gone through this cruel novitiate, we showed no mercy on a newcomer, never sparing him the mockery, the catechism, the impertinence, which were inexhaustible on such occasions, to the discomfiture of the neophyte, whose manners, strength, and temper were thus tested. Lambert, whether he was stoical, or dumfounded, made no reply to any questions. One of us thereupon remarked that he was no doubt of the school of Pythagoras, and there was a shout of laughter. The new boy was thenceforth Pythagoras through all his life at the college. At the same time, Lambert's piercing eye, the scorn expressed in his face for our childishness, so far removed from the stamp of his own nature, the easy attitude he assumed, and his evident strength in proportion to his years, infused a certain respect into the veriest scamps among us. For my part, I kept near him, absorbed in studying him in silence.

Louis Lambert was slightly built, nearly five feet in height; his face was tanned, and his hands were burnt brown by the sun, giving him an appearance of manly vigor, which, in fact, he did not possess. Indeed, two months after he came to the college, when study in the classroom had faded his vivid, so to speak, vegetable coloring, he became as pale and white as a woman.

His head was unusually large. His hair, of a fine, bright

black in masses of curls, gave wonderful beauty to his brow, of which the proportions were extraordinary even to us heedless boys, knowing nothing, as may be supposed, of the auguries of phrenology, a science still in its cradle. The distinction of this prophetic brow lay principally in the exquisitely chiseled shape of the arches under which his black eyes sparkled, and which had the transparency of alabaster, the line having the unusual beauty of being perfectly level to where it met the top of the nose. But when you saw his eyes it was difficult to think of the rest of his face, which was indeed plain enough, for their look was full of a wonderful variety of expression; they seemed to have a soul in their depths. At one moment astonishingly clear and piercing, at another full of heavenly sweetness, those eyes became dull, almost colorless, as it seemed, when he was lost in meditation. They then looked like a window from which the sun had suddenly vanished after lighting it up. His strength and his voice were no less variable; equally rigid, equally unexpected. His tone could be as sweet as that of a woman compelled to own her love; at other times it was labored, rough, rugged, if I may use such words in a new sense. As to his strength, he was habitually incapable of enduring the fatigue of any game, and seemed weakly, almost infirm. But during the early days of his school life, one of our little bullies having made game of this sickliness, which rendered him unfit for the violent exercise in vogue among his fellows, Lambert took hold with both hands of one of the class tables, consisting of twelve large desks, face to face and sloping from the middle; he leaned back against the class-master's desk, steadying the table with his feet on the crossbar below, and said—

"Now, ten of you try to move it!"

I was present, and can vouch for this strange display of strength; it was impossible to move the table.

Lambert had the gift of summoning to his aid at certain times the most extraordinary powers, and of concentrating all his forces on a given point. But children, like men, are wont to judge of everything by first impressions, and after the first few days we ceased to study Louis; he entirely belied

Mme. de Staël's prognostications, and displayed none of the prodigies we looked for in him.

After three months at school, Louis was looked upon as a quite ordinary scholar. I alone was allowed really to know that sublime—why should I not say divine?—soul, for what is nearer to God than genius in the heart of a child? The similarity of our tastes and ideas made us friends and chums; our intimacy was so brotherly that our schoolfellows joined our two names; one was never spoken without the other, and to call either they always shouted "Poet-and-Pythagoras!" Some other names had been known coupled in a like manner. Thus for two years I was the school friend of poor Louis Lambert; and during that time my life was so identified with his, that I am enabled now to write his intellectual biography.

It was long before I fully knew the poetry and the wealth of ideas that lay hidden in my companion's heart and brain. It was not till I was thirty years of age, till my experience was matured and condensed, till the flash of an intense illumination had thrown a fresh light upon it, that I was capable of understanding all the bearings of the phenomena which I witnessed at that early time. I benefited by them without understanding their greatness or their processes; indeed, I have forgotten some, or remember only the most conspicuous facts; still, my memory is now able to co-ordinate them, and I have mastered the secrets of that fertile brain by looking back to the delightful days of our boyish affection. So it was time alone that initiated me into the meaning of the events and facts that were crowded into that obscure life, as into that of many another man who is lost to science. Indeed, this narrative, so far as the expression and appreciation of many things is concerned, will be found full of what may be termed moral anachronisms, which perhaps will not detract from its peculiar interest.

In the course of the first few months after coming to Vendôme, Louis became the victim of a malady which, though the symptoms were invisible to the eye of our superiors, considerably interfered with the exercise of his remarkable gifts. Accustomed to live in the open air, and to the freedom of a

purely haphazard education, happy in the tender care of an old man who was devoted to him, used to meditating in the sunshine, he found it very hard to submit to college rules, to walk in the ranks, to live within the four walls of a room where eighty boys were sitting in silence on wooden forms each in front of his desk. His senses were developed to such perfection as gave them the most sensitive keenness, and every part of him suffered from this life in common.

The effluvia that vitiated the air, mingled with the odors of a classroom that was never clean or free from the fragments of our breakfasts or snacks, affected his sense of smell, the sense which, being more immediately connected than the others with the nerve centers of the brain, must, when shocked, cause invisible disturbance to the organs of thought.

Besides these elements of impurity in the atmosphere, there were lockers in the classrooms in which the boys kept their miscellaneous plunder—pigeons killed for fête days, or titbits filched from the dinner-table. In each classroom, too, there was a large stone slab, on which two pails full of water were kept standing, a sort of sink, where we every morning washed our faces and hands, one after another, in the master's presence. We then passed on to a table, where women combed and powdered our hair. Thus the place, being cleaned but once a day before we were up, was always more or less dirty. In spite of numerous windows and lofty doors, the air was constantly fouled by the smells from the washing-place, the hairdressing, the lockers, and the thousand messes made by the boys, to say nothing of their eighty closely packed bodies. And this sort of *humus*, mingling with the mud we brought in from the playing-yard, produced a suffocatingly pestilent muck-heap.

The loss of the fresh and fragrant country air in which he had hitherto lived, the change of habits and strict discipline, combined to depress Lambert. With his elbow on his desk and his head supported on his left hand, he spent the hours of study gazing at the trees in the court or the clouds in the sky; he seemed to be thinking of his lessons; but the master, seeing his pen motionless, or the sheet before him still a blank, would call out—

"Lambert, you are doing nothing!"

This "*you are doing nothing!*" was a pin-thrust that wounded Louis to the quick. And then he never earned the rest of playtime; he always had impositions to write. The imposition, a punishment which varies according to the practice of different schools, consisted at Vendôme of a certain number of lines to be written out in play hours. Lambert and I were so overpowered with impositions, that we had not six free days during the two years of our school friendship. But for the books we took out of the library, which maintained some vitality in our brains, this system of discipline would have reduced us to idiotcy. Want of exercise is fatal to children. The habit of preserving a dignified appearance, begun in tender infancy, has, it is said, a visible effect on the constitution of royal personages when the faults of such an education are not counteracted by the life of the battlefield or the laborious sport of hunting. And if the laws of etiquette and Court manners can act on the spinal marrow to such an extent as to affect the pelvis of kings, to soften their cerebral tissue, and to degenerate the race, what deep-seated mischief, physical and moral, must result in schoolboys from the constant lack of air, exercise, and cheerfulness!

Indeed, the rules of punishment carried out in schools deserve the attention of the Office of Public Instruction when any thinkers are to be found there who do not think exclusively of themselves.

We incurred the infliction of an imposition in a thousand ways. Our memory was so good that we never learned a lesson. It was enough for either of us to hear our classfellows repeat the task in French, Latin, or grammar, and we could say it when our turn came; but if the master, unfortunately, took it into his head to reverse the usual order and call upon us first, we very often did not even know what the lesson was; then the imposition fell in spite of our most ingenious excuses. Then we always put off writing our exercises till the last moment; if there were a book to be finished, or if we were lost in thought, the task was forgotten —again an imposition. How often have we scribbled an exercise during the time when the head-boy, whose business it

was to collect them when we came into school, was gathering them from the others!

In addition to the moral misery which Lambert went through in trying to acclimatize himself to college life, there was a scarcely less cruel apprenticeship through which every boy had to pass: to those bodily sufferings which seemed infinitely varied. The tenderness of a child's skin needs extreme care, especially in winter, when a schoolboy is constantly exchanging the frozen air of the muddy playing-ground for the stuffy atmosphere of the classroom. The "little boys" and the smallest of all, for lack of a mother's care, were martyrs to chilblains and chaps so severe that they had to be regularly dressed during the breakfast hour; but this could only be very indifferently done to so many damaged hands, toes, and heels. A good many of the boys indeed were obliged to prefer the evil to the remedy; the choice constantly lay between their lessons waiting to be finished or the joys of a slide, and waiting for a bandage carelessly put on, and still more carelessly cast off again. Also it was the fashion in the school to gibe at the poor, feeble creatures who went to be doctored; the bullies vied with each other in snatching off the rags which the infirmary nurse had tied on. Hence, in winter, many of us, with half-dead feet and fingers, sick with pain, were incapable of work, and punished for not working. The Fathers, too often deluded by shammed ailments, would not believe in real suffering.

The price paid for our schooling and board also covered the cost of clothing. The committee contracted for the shoes and clothes supplied to the boys; hence the weekly inspection of which I have spoken. This plan, though admirable for the manager, is always disastrous to the managed. Woe to the boy who indulged in the bad habit of treading his shoes down at heel, of cracking the shoe leather, or wearing out the soles too fast, whether from a defect in his gait, or by fidgeting during lessons in obedience to the instinctive need of movement common to all children. That boy did not get through the winter without great suffering. In the first place, his chilblains would ache and shoot as badly as a fit of the gout; then the rivets and pack-thread intended to repair the shoes

would give way, or the broken heels would prevent the wretched shoes from keeping on his feet; he was obliged to drag them wearily along the frozen roads, or sometimes to dispute their possession with the clay soil of the district; the water and snow got in through some unnoticed crack or ill-sewn patch, and the foot would swell.

Out of sixty boys, not ten perhaps could walk without some special form of torture; and yet all kept up with the body of the troop, dragged on by the general movement, as men are driven through life by life itself. Many a time some proud-tempered boy would shed tears of rage while summoning his remaining energy to run ahead and get home again in spite of pain, so sensitively afraid of laughter or of pity—two forms of scorn—is the still tender soul at that age.

At school, as in social life, the strong despise the feeble without knowing in what true strength consists.

Nor was this all. No gloves. If by good hap a boy's parents, the infirmary nurse, or the headmaster gave gloves to a particularly delicate lad, the wags or the big boys of the class would put them on the stove, amused to see them dry and shrivel; or if the gloves escaped the marauders, after getting wet they shrunk as they dried for want of care. No, gloves were impossible. Gloves were a privilege, and boys insist on equality.

Louis Lambert fell a victim to all these varieties of torment. Like many contemplative men, who, when lost in thought, acquire a habit of mechanical motion, he had a mania for fidgeting with his shoes, and destroyed them very quickly. His girlish complexion, the skin of his ears and lips, cracked with the least cold. His soft white hands grew red and swollen. He had perpetual colds. Thus he was a constant sufferer till he became inured to school life. Taught at last by cruel experience, he was obliged to "look after his things," to use the school phrase. He was forced to take care of his locker, his desk, his clothes, his shoes; to protect his ink, his books, his copy-paper, and his pens from pilferers; in short, to give his mind to the thousand details of our trivial life, to which more selfish and commonplace minds devoted such strict attention—thus infallibly securing prizes for "proficiency"

and " good conduct "—while they were overlooked by a boy of the highest promise, who, under the hand of an almost divine imagination, gave himself up with rapture to the flow of his ideas.

This was not all. There is a perpetual struggle going on between the masters and the boys, struggle without truce, to be compared with nothing else in the social world, unless it be the resistance of the opposition to the ministry in a representative government. But journalists and opposition speakers are probably less prompt to take advantage of a weak point, less extreme in resenting an injury, and less merciless in their mockery than boys are in regard to those who rule over them. It is a task to put angels out of patience. An unhappy class-master must then not be too severely blamed, ill-paid as he is, and consequently not too competent, if he is occasionally unjust or out of temper. Perpetually watched by a hundred mocking eyes, and surrounded with snares, he sometimes revenges himself for his own blunders on the boys who are only too ready to detect them.

Unless for serious misdemeanors, for which there were other forms of punishment, the strap was regarded at Vendôme as the *ultima ratio Patrum.* Exercises forgotten, lessons ill learnt, common ill behavior were sufficiently punished by an imposition, but offended dignity spoke in the master through the strap. Of all the physical torments to which we were exposed, certainly the most acute was that inflicted by this leathern instrument, about two fingers wide, applied to our poor little hands with all the strength and all the fury of the administrator. To endure this classical form of correction, the victim knelt in the middle of the room. He had to leave his form and go to kneel down near the master's desk under the curious and generally merciless eyes of his fellows. To sensitive natures these preliminaries were an introductory torture, like the journey from the Palais de Justice to the Place de Grève which the condemned used to make to the scaffold.

Some boys cried out and shed bitter tears before or after the application of the strap; others accepted the infliction with stoic calm; it was a question of nature; but few could control an expression of anguish in anticipation.

Louis Lambert was constantly enduring the strap, and owed it to a peculiarity of his physiognomy of which he was for a long time quite unconscious. Whenever he was suddenly roused from a fit of abstraction by the master's cry, "You are doing nothing!" it often happened that, without knowing it, he flashed at his teacher a look full of fierce contempt, and charged with thought, as a Leyden jar is charged with electricity. This look, no doubt, discomfited the master, who, indignant at this unspoken retort, wished to cure his scholar of that thunderous flash.

The first time the Father took offense at this ray of scorn, which struck him like a lightning flash, he made this speech, as I well remember—

"If you look at me again in that way, Lambert, you will get the strap."

At these words every nose was in the air, every eye looked alternately at the master and at Louis. The observation was so utterly foolish, that the boy again looked at the Father, overwhelming him with another flash. From this arose a standing feud between Lambert and his master, resulting in a certain amount of "strap." Thus did he first discover the power of his eye.

The hapless poet, so full of nerves, as sensitive as a woman, under the sway of chronic melancholy, and as sick with genius as a girl with love that she pines for, knowing nothing of it; —this boy, at once so powerful and so weak, transplanted by "Corinne" from the country he loved, to be squeezed in the mold of a collegiate routine to which every spirit and every body must yield, whatever their range or temperament, accepting its rule and its uniform as gold is crushed into round coin under the press; Louis Lambert suffered in every spot where pain can touch the soul or the flesh. Stuck on a form, restricted to the acreage of his desk, a victim to the strap and to a sickly frame, tortured in every sense, environed by distress—everything compelled him to give his body up to the myriad tyrannies of school life; and, like the martyrs who smiled in the midst of suffering, he took refuge in heaven, which lay open to his mind. Perhaps this life of purely in-

ward emotions helped him to see something of the mysteries he so entirely believed in!

Our independence, our illicit amusements, our apparent waste of time, our persistent indifference, our frequent punishments and aversion for our exercises and impositions, earned us a reputation, which no one cared to controvert, for being an idle and incorrigible pair. Our masters treated us with contempt, and we fell into utter disgrace with our companions, from whom we concealed our secret studies for fear of being laughed at. This hard judgment, which was injustice in the masters, was but natural in our schoolfellows. We could neither play ball, nor run races, nor walk on stilts. On exceptional holidays, when amnesty was proclaimed, and we got a few hours of freedom, we shared in none of the popular diversions of the school. Aliens from the pleasures enjoyed by the others, we were outcasts, sitting forlorn under a tree in the playing-ground. The Poet-and-Pythagoras formed an exception and led a life apart from the life of the rest.

The penetrating instinct and unerring conceit of schoolboys made them feel that we were of a nature either far above or far beneath their own; hence some simply hated our aristocratic reserve, others merely scorned our ineptitude. These feelings were equally shared by us without our knowing it; perhaps I have but now divined them. We lived exactly like two rats, huddled into the corner of the room where our desks were, sitting there alike during lesson time and play hours. This strange state of affairs inevitably and in fact placed us on a footing of war with all the other boys in our division. Forgotten for the most part, we sat there very contentedly; half happy, like two plants, two images who would have been missed from the furniture of the room. But the most aggressive of our schoolfellows would sometimes torment us, just to show their malignant power, and we responded with stolid contempt, which brought many a thrashing down on the Poet-and-Pythagoras.

Lambert's homesickness lasted for many months. I know no words to describe the dejection to which he was a prey. Louis has taken the glory off many a masterpiece for me. We had both played the part of the "Leper of Aosta," and

had both experienced the feelings described in M. de Maistre's story, before we read them as expressed by his eloquent pen. A book may, indeed, revive the memories of our childhood, but it can never compete with them successfully. Lambert's woes had taught me many a chant of sorrow far more appealing than the finest passages in *Werther*. And, indeed, there is no possible comparison between the pangs of a passion condemned, whether rightly or wrongly, by every law, and the grief of a poor child pining for the glorious sunshine, the dews of the valley, and liberty. Werther is the slave of desire; Louis Lambert was an enslaved soul. Given equal talent, the more pathetic sorrow, founded on desires which, being purer, are the more genuine, must transcend the wail even of genius.

After sitting for a long time with his eyes fixed on a lime-tree in the playground, Louis would say just a word; but that word would reveal an infinite speculation.

"Happily for me," he exclaimed one day, "there are hours of comfort when I feel as though the walls of the room had fallen and I were away—away in the fields! What a pleasure it is to let oneself go on the stream of one's thoughts as a bird is borne up on its wings!"

"Why is green a color so largely diffused throughout creation?" he would ask me. "Why are there so few straight lines in nature? Why is it that man, in his structures, rarely introduces curves? Why is it that he alone, of all creatures, has a sense of straightness?"

These queries revealed long excursions in space. He had, I am sure, seen vast landscapes, fragrant with the scent of woods. He was always silent and resigned, a living elegy, always suffering, but unable to complain of suffering. An eagle that needed the world to feed him, shut in between four narrow, dirty walls; and thus his life became an ideal life in the strictest meaning of the words. Filled as he was with contempt of the almost useless studies to which we were harnessed, Louis went on his skyward way absolutely unconscious of the things about us.

I, obeying the imitative instinct that is so strong in childhood, tried to regulate my life in conformity with his. And

Louis the more easily infected me with the sort of torpor in which deep contemplation leaves the body, because I was younger and more impressionable than he. Like two lovers, we got into the habit of thinking together in a common reverie. His intuitions had already acquired that acuteness which must surely characterize the intellectual perceptiveness of great poets and often bring them to the verge of madness.

"Do you ever feel," said he to me one day, "as though imagined suffering affected you in spite of yourself? If, for instance, I think with concentration of the effect that the blade of my penknife would have in piercing my flesh, I feel an acute pain as if I had really cut myself; only the blood is wanting. But the pain comes suddenly, and startles me like a sharp noise breaking profound silence. Can an idea cause physical pain!—What do you say to that, eh?"

When he gave utterance to such subtle reflections, we both fell into artless meditation; we set to work to detect in ourselves the inscrutable phenomena of the origin of thoughts, which Lambert hoped to discover in their earliest germ, so as to describe some day the unknown process. Then, after much discussion, often mixed up with childish notions, a look would flash from Lambert's eager eyes; he would grasp my hand, and a word from the depths of his soul would show the current of his mind.

"Thinking is seeing," said he one day, carried away by some objection raised as to the first principle of our organization. "Every human science is based on deduction, which is a slow process of seeing by which we work up from the effect of the cause; or, in a wider sense, all poetry, like every work of art, proceeds from a swift vision of things."

He was a spiritualist (as opposed to materialism); but I would venture to contradict him, using his own arguments to consider the intellect as a purely physical phenomenon. We both were right. Perhaps the words materialism and spiritualism express the two faces of the same fact. His considerations on the substance of the mind led to his accepting, with a certain pride, the life of privation to which we were condemned in consequence of our idleness and our indifference to learn-

ing. He had a certain consciousness of his own powers which bore him up through his spiritual cogitations. How delightful it was to me to feel his soul acting on my own! Many a time have we remained sitting on our form, both buried in one book, having quite forgotten each other's existence, and yet not apart; each conscious of the other's presence, and bathing in an ocean of thought, like two fish swimming in the same waters.

Our life, apparently, was merely vegetating; but we lived through our heart and brain.

Lambert's influence over my imagination left traces that still abide. I used to listen hungrily to his tales, full of the marvels which make men, as well as children, rapturously devour stories in which truth assumes the most grotesque forms. His passion for mystery, and the credulity natural to the young, often led us to discuss heaven and hell. Then Louis, by expounding Swedenborg, would try to make me share in his beliefs concerning angels. In his least logical arguments there were still amazing observations as to the powers of man, which gave his words that color of truth without which nothing can be done in any art. The romantic end he foresaw as the destiny of man was calculated to flatter the yearning which tempts blameless imaginations to give themselves up to beliefs. Is it not during the youth of a nation that its dogmas and idols are conceived? And are not the supernatural beings before whom the people trembled the personification of their feeling and their magnified desires?

All that I can now remember of the poetical conversations we held together concerning the Swedish prophet, whose works I have since had the curiosity to read, may be told in a few paragraphs.

In each of us there are two distinct beings. According to Swedenborg, the angel is an individual in whom the inner being conquers the external being. If a man desires to earn his call to be an angel, as soon as his mind reveals to him his twofold existence, he must strive to foster the delicate angelic essence that exists within him. If, for lack of a lucid appreciation of his destiny, he allows bodily action to

predominate, instead of confirming his intellectual being, all his powers will be absorbed in the use of his external senses, and the angel will slowly perish by the materialism of both natures. In the contrary case, if he nourishes his inner being with the aliment needful to it, the soul triumphs over matter and strives to get free.

When they separate by the act of what we call death, the angel, strong enough then to cast off its wrappings, survives and begins its real life. The infinite variety which differentiates individual men can only be explained by this twofold existence, which, again, is proved and made intelligible by that variety.

In point of fact, the wide distance between a man whose torpid intelligence condemns him to evident stupidity, and one who, by the exercise of his inner life, has acquired the gift of some power, allows us to suppose that there is as great a difference between men of genius and other beings as there is between the blind and those who see. This hypothesis, since it extends creation beyond all limits, gives us, as it were, the clew to heaven. The beings who, here on earth, are apparently mingled without distinction, are there distributed, according to their inner perfection, in distinct spheres whose speech and manners have nothing in common. In the invisible world, as in the real world, if some native of the lower spheres comes, all unworthy, into a higher sphere, not only can he never understand the customs and language there, but his mere presence paralyzes the voice and hearts of those who dwell therein.

Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, had perhaps some slight intuition of those spheres which begin in the world of torment, and rise, circle on circle, to the highest heaven. Thus Swedenborg's doctrine is the product of a lucid spirit noting down the innumerable signs by which the angels manifest their presence among men.

This doctrine, which I have endeavored to sum up in a more or less consistent form, was set before me by Lambert with all the fascination of mysticism, swathed in the wrappings of the phraseology affected by mystical writers: an obscure language full of abstractions, and taking such effect

on the brain, that there are books by Jacob Bœhm, Swedenborg, and Mme. Guyon, so strangely powerful that they give rise to phantasies as various as the dreams of the opium-eater. Lambert told me of mystical facts so extraordinary, he so acted on my imagination, that he made my brain reel. Still, I loved to plunge into that realm of mystery, invisible to the senses, in which everyone likes to dwell, whether he pictures it to himself under the indefinite ideal of the Future, or clothes it in the more solid guise of romance. These violent revulsions of the mind on itself gave me, without my knowing it, a comprehension of its power, and accustomed me to the workings of the mind.

Lambert himself explained everything by his theory of the angels. To him pure love—love as we dream of it in youth—was the coalescence of two angelic natures. Nothing could exceed the fervency with which he longed to meet a woman angel. And who better than he could inspire or feel love? If anything could give an impression of an exquisite nature, was it not the amiability and kindliness that marked his feelings, his words, his actions, his slightest gestures, the conjugal regard that united us as boys, and that we expressed when we called ourselves *chums?*

There was no distinction for us between my ideas and his. We imitated each other's handwriting, so that one might write the tasks of both. Thus, if one of us had a book to finish and to return to the mathematical master, he could read on without interruption while the other scribbled off his exercise and imposition. We did our tasks as though paying a tax on our peace of mind. If my memory does not play me false, they were sometimes of remarkable merit when Lambert did them. But on the foregone conclusion that we were both of us idiots, the master always went through them under a rooted prejudice, and even kept them to read to be laughed at by our schoolfellows.

I remember one afternoon, at the end of the lesson, which lasted from two till four, the master took possession of a page of translation by Lambert. The passage began with, *Caius Gracchus, vir nobilis;* Lambert had construed this by "Caius Gracchus had a noble heart."

"Where do you find 'heart' in *nobilis?*" said the Father sharply.

And there was a roar of laughter, while Lambert looked at the master in some bewilderment.

"What would Mme. la Baronne de Staël say if she could know that you make such nonsense of a word that means of noble family, of patrician rank?"

"She would say that you were an ass!" said I in a muttered tone.

"Master Poet, you will stay in for a week," replied the master, who unfortunately overheard me.

Lambert simply repeated, looking at me with inexpressible affection, "*Vir nobilis!*"

Mme. de Staël was, in fact, partly the cause of Lambert's troubles. On every pretext masters and pupils threw the name in his teeth, either in irony or in reproof.

Louis lost no time in getting himself "kept in" to share my imprisonment. Freer thus than in any other circumstances, we could talk the whole day long in the silence of the dormitories, where each boy had a cubicle six feet square, the partitions consisting at the top of open bars. The doors, fitted with gratings, were locked at night and opened in the morning under the eye of the Father whose duty it was to superintend our rising and going to bed. The creak of these gates, which the college servants unlocked with remarkable expedition, was a sound peculiar to that college. These little cells were our prison, and boys were sometimes shut up there for a month at a time. The boys in these coops were under the stern eye of the prefect, a sort of censor who stole up at certain hours, or at unexpected moments, with a silent step, to hear if we were talking instead of writing our impositions. But a few walnut shells dropped on the stairs, or the sharpness of our hearing, almost always enabled us to beware of his coming, so we could give ourselves up without anxiety to our favorite studies. However, as books were prohibited, our prison hours were chiefly filled up with metaphysical discussions, or with relating singular facts connected with the phenomena of mind.

One of the most extraordinary of these incidents beyond

question is this, which I will here record, not only because it concerns Lambert, but because it perhaps was the turning-point of his scientific career. By the law of custom in all schools, Thursday and Sunday were holidays; but the services, which we were made to attend very regularly, so completely filled up Sunday, that we considered Thursday our only real day of freedom. After once attending Mass, we had a long day before us to spend in walks in the country round the town of Vendôme. The manor of Rochambeau was the most interesting object of our excursions, perhaps by reason of its distance; the smaller boys were very seldom taken on so fatiguing an expedition. However, once or twice a year the class-masters would hold out Rochambeau as a reward for diligence.

In 1812, towards the end of the spring, we were to go there for the first time. Our anxiety to see this famous château of Rochambeau, where the owner sometimes treated the boys to milk, made us all very good, and nothing hindered the outing. Neither Lambert nor I had ever seen the pretty valley of the Loir where the house stood. So his imagination and mine were much excited by the prospect of this excursion, which filled the school with traditional glee. We talked of it all the evening, planning to spend in fruit or milk such money as we had saved, against all the habits of school life.

After dinner next day, we set out at half-past twelve, each provided with a square hunch of bread, given to us for our afternoon snack. And off we went, as gay as swallows, marching in a body on the famous château with an eagerness which would at first allow of no fatigue. When we reached the hill, whence we looked down on the house standing halfway down the slope, on the devious valley through which the river winds and sparkles between meadows in graceful curves—a beautiful landscape, one of those scenes to which the keen emotions of early youth or of love lend such a charm, that it is wise never to see them again in later years—Louis Lambert said to me, "Why, I saw this last night in a dream."

He recognized the clump of trees under which we were standing, the grouping of the woods, the color of the water, the turrets of the château, the details, the distance, in fact

every part of the prospect which he looked on for the first time. We were mere children; I, at any rate, who was but thirteen; Louis, at fifteen, might have the precocity of genius, but at that time we were incapable of falsehood in the most trivial matters of our life as friends. Indeed, if Lambert's powerful mind had any presentiment of the importance of such facts, he was far from appreciating their whole bearing; and he was quite astonished by this incident. I asked him if he had not perhaps been brought to Rochambeau in his infancy, and my question struck him; but after thinking it over, he answered in the negative. This incident, analogous to what may be known of the phenomena of sleep in several persons, will illustrate the beginnings of Lambert's line of talent; he took it, in fact, as the basis of a whole system, using a fragment—as Cuvier did in another branch of inquiry—as a clew to the reconstruction of a complete system.

At this moment we were sitting together on an old oak-stump, and after a few minutes' reflection, Louis said to me—

"If the landscape did not come to me—which it is absurd to imagine—I must have come here. If I was here while I was asleep in my cubicle, does not that constitute a complete severance of my body and my inner being? Does it not prove some inscrutable locomotive faculty in the spirit with effects resembling those of locomotion in the body? Well, then, if my spirit and my body can be severed during sleep, why should I not insist on their separating in the same way while I am awake? I see no halfway mean between the two propositions.

"But if we go further into details: Either the facts are due to the action of a faculty which brings out a second being to whom my body is merely a husk, since I was in my cell, and yet I saw the landscape—and this upsets many systems; or the facts took place either in some nerve center, of which the name is yet to be discovered, where our feelings dwell and move; or else in the cerebral center, where ideas are formed. This last hypothesis gives rise to some strange questions. I walked, I saw, I heard. Motion is inconceivable but in space, sound acts only at certain angles or on surfaces,

color is caused only by light. If, in the dark, with my eyes shut, I saw, in myself, colored objects; if I heard sounds in the most perfect silence and without the conditions requisite for the production of sound; if without stirring I traversed wide tracts of space, there must be inner faculties independent of the external laws of physics. Material nature must be penetrable by the spirit.

"How is it that men have hitherto given so little thought to the phenomena of sleep, which seem to prove that man has a double life? May there not be a new science lying beneath them?" he added, striking his brow with his hand. "If not the elements of a science, at any rate the revelation of stupendous powers in man; at least they prove a frequent severance of our two natures, the fact I have been thinking out for a very long time. At last, then, I have hit on evidence to show the superiority that distinguishes our latent senses from our corporeal senses! *Homo duplex!*

"And yet," he went on, after a pause, with a doubtful shrug, "perhaps we have not two natures; perhaps we are merely gifted with personal and perfectible qualities, of which the development within us produces certain unobserved phenomena of activity, penetration, and vision. In our love of the marvelous, a passion begotten of our pride, we have translated these effects into poetical inventions, because we did not understand them. It is so convenient to defy the incomprehensible!

"I should, I own, lament over the loss of my illusions. I so much wished to believe in our twofold nature and in Swedenborg's angels. Must this new science destroy them? Yes; for the study of our unknown properties involves us in a science that appears to be materialistic, for the Spirit uses, divides, and animates the Substance; but it does not destroy it."

He remained pensive, almost sad. Perhaps he saw the dreams of his youth as swaddling clothes that he must soon shake off.

"Sight and hearing are, no doubt, the sheaths for a very marvelous instrument," said he, laughing at his own figure of speech.

Always when he was talking to me of heaven and hell, he was wont to treat of nature as being master; but now, as he pronounced these last words, big with prescience, he seemed to soar more boldly than ever above the landscape, and his forehead seemed ready to burst with the afflatus of genius. His powers—mental powers we must call them till some new term is found—seemed to flash from the organs intended to express them. His eyes shot out thoughts; his uplifted hand, his silent but tremulous lips were eloquent; his burning glance was radiant; at last his head, as though too heavy, or exhausted by too eager a flight, fell on his breast. This boy—this giant—bent his head, took my hand and clasped it in his own, which was damp, so fevered was he for the search for truth; then, after a pause, he said—

"I shall be famous!—And you, too," he added after a pause. "We will both study the Chemistry of the Will."

Noble soul! I recognized his superiority, though he took great care never to make me feel it. He shared with me all the treasures of his mind, and regarded me as instrumental in his discoveries, leaving me the credit of my insignificant contributions. He was always as gracious as a woman in love; he had all the bashful feeling, the delicacy of soul which make life happy and pleasant to endure.

On the following day he began writing what he called a *Treatise on the Will;* his subsequent reflections led to many changes in its plan and method; but the incident of that day was certainly the germ of the work, just as the electric shock always felt by Mesmer at the approach of a particular manservant was the starting-point of his discoveries in magnetism, a science till then interred under the mysteries of Isis, of Delphi, of the cave of Trophonius, and rediscovered by that prodigious genius, close on Lavater, and the precursor of Gall.

Lambert's ideas, suddenly illuminated by this flash of light, assumed vaster proportions; he disentangled certain truths from his many acquisitions and brought them into order; then, like a founder, he cast the model of his work. At the

end of six months' indefatigable labor, Lambert's writings excited the curiosity of our companions, and became the object of cruel practical jokes which led to a fatal issue.

One day one of the masters, who was bent on seeing the manuscripts, enlisted the aid of our tyrants, and came to seize, by force, a box that contained the precious papers. Lambert and I defended it with incredible courage. The trunk was locked, our aggressors could not open it, but they tried to smash it in the struggle, a stroke of malignity at which we shrieked with rage. Some of the boys, with a sense of justice, or struck perhaps by our heroic defense, advised the attacking party to leave us in peace, crushing us with insulting contempt. But suddenly, brought to the spot by the noise of a battle, Father Haugoult roughly intervened, inquiring as to the cause of the fight. Our enemies had interrupted us in writing our impositions, and the class-master came to protect his slaves. The foe, in self-defense, betrayed the existence of the manuscript. The dreadful Haugoult insisted on our giving up the box; if we should resist, he would have it broken open. Lambert gave him the key; the master took out the papers, glanced through them, and said, as he confiscated them—

"And it is for such rubbish as this that you neglect your lessons!"

Large tears fell from Lambert's eyes, wrung from him as much by a sense of his offended moral superiority as by the gratuitous insult and betrayal that we had suffered. We gave the accusers a glance of stern reproach: had they not delivered us over to the common enemy? If the common law of school entitled them to thrash us, did it not require them to keep silence as to our misdeeds?

In a moment they were no doubt ashamed of their baseness.

Father Haugoult probably sold the *Treatise on the Will* to a local grocer, unconscious of the scientific treasure, of which the germs thus fell into unworthy hands.

Six months later I left the school, and I do not know whether Lambert ever recommenced his labors. Our parting threw him into a mood of the darkest melancholy.

It was in memory of the disaster that befell Louis's book that, in the tale which comes first in these *Études*, I adopted the title invented by Lambert for a work of fiction, and gave the name of a woman who was dear to him to a girl characterized by her self-devotion; but this is not all I have borrowed from him: his character and occupations were of great value to me in writing that book, and the subject arose from some reminiscences of our youthful meditations. This present volume is intended as a modest monument, a broken column, to commemorate the life of the man who bequeathed to me all he had to leave—his thoughts.

In that boyish effort Lambert had enshrined the ideas of a man. Ten years later, when I met some learned men who were devoting serious attention to the phenomena that had struck us and that Lambert had so marvelously analyzed, I understood the value of his work, then already forgotten as childish. I at once spent several months in recalling the principal theories discovered by my poor schoolmate. Having collected my reminiscences, I can boldly state that, by 1812, he had proved, divined, and set forth in his *Treatise* several important facts of which, as he had declared, evidence was certain to come sooner or later. His philosophical speculations ought undoubtedly to gain him recognition as one of the great thinkers who have appeared at wide intervals among men, to reveal to them the bare skeleton of some science to come, of which the roots spread slowly, but which, in due time, bring forth fair fruit in the intellectual sphere. Thus a humble artisan, Bernard Palissy, searching the soil to find minerals for glazing pottery, proclaimed, in the sixteenth century, with the infallible intuition of genius, geological facts which it is now the glory of Cuvier and Buffon to have demonstrated.

I can, I believe, give some idea of Lambert's *Treatise* by stating the chief propositions on which it was based; but, in spite of myself, I shall strip them of the ideas in which they were clothed, and which were indeed their indispensable accompaniment. I started on a different path, and only made use of those of his researches which answered the purpose of my scheme. I know not, therefore, whether as his disciple I

can faithfully expound his views, having assimilated them in the first instance so as to color them with my own.

New ideas require new words, or a new and expanded use of old words, extended and defined in their meaning. Thus Lambert, to set forth the basis of his system, had adopted certain common words that answered to his notions. The word Will he used to connote the medium in which the mind moves, or to use a less abstract expression, the mass of power by which man can reproduce, outside himself, the actions constituting his external life. Volition—a word due to Locke —expressed the act by which a man exerts his will. The word Mind, or Thought, which he regarded as the quintessential product of the Will, also represented the medium in which the ideas originate to which thought gives substance. The Idea, a name common to every creation of the brain, constituted the act by which man uses his mind. Thus the Will and the Mind were two generating forces; the Volition and the Idea were the two products. Volition, he thought, was the Idea evolved from the abstract state to a concrete state, from its generative fluid to a solid expression, so to speak, if such words may be taken to formulate notions so difficult of definition. According to him, the Mind and Ideas are the motion and the outcome of our inner organization, just as the Will and Volition are of our external activity.

He gave the Will precedence over the Mind.

"You must will before you can think," he said. "Many beings live in a condition of Willing without ever attaining to the condition of Thinking. In the North, life is long; in the South, it is shorter; but in the North we see torpor, in the South a constant excitability of the Will, up to the point where from an excess of cold or of heat the organs are almost nullified."

The use of the word "medium" was suggested to him by an observation he had made in his childhood, though, to be sure, he had no suspicion then of its importance, but its singularity naturally struck his delicately alert imagination. His mother, a fragile, nervous woman, all sensitiveness and affection, was one of those beings created to represent womanhood in all the perfection of her attributes, but

relegated by a mistaken fate to too low a place in the social scale. Wholly loving, and consequently wholly suffering, she died young, having thrown all her energies into her motherly love. Lambert, a child of six, lying, but not always sleeping, in a cot by his mother's bed, saw the electric sparks from her hair when she combed it. The man of fifteen made scientific application of this fact which had amused the child, a fact beyond dispute, of which there is ample evidence in many instances, especially of women who by a sad fatality are doomed to let unappreciated feelings evaporate in the air, or some superabundant power run to waste.

In support of his definitions, Lambert propounded a variety of problems to be solved, challenges flung out to science, though he proposed to seek the solution for himself. He inquired, for instance, whether the element that constitutes electricity does not enter as a base into the specific fluid whence our Ideas and Volitions proceed? Whether the hair, which loses its color, turns white, falls out, or disappears, in proportion to the decay or crystallization of our thoughts, may not be in fact a capillary system, either absorbent or diffusive, and wholly electrical? Whether the fluid phenomena of the Will, a matter generated within us, and spontaneously reacting under the impress of conditions as yet unobserved, were at all more extraordinary than those of the invisible and intangible fluid produced by a voltaic pile, and applied to the nervous system of a dead man? Whether the formation of Ideas and their constant diffusion was less incomprehensible than evaporation of the atoms, imperceptible indeed, but so violent in their effects, that are given off from a grain of musk without any loss of weight. Whether, granting that the function of the skin is purely protective, absorbent, excretive, and tactile, the circulation of the blood and all its mechanism would not correspond with the transubstantiation of our Will, as the circulation of the nerve fluid corresponds to that of the Mind? Finally, whether the more or less rapid affluence of these two real substances may not be the result of a certain perfection or imperfection of organs whose conditions require investigation in every manifestation?

Having set forth these principles, he proposed to class the

phenomena of human life in two series of distinct results, demanding, with the ardent insistency of conviction, a special analysis for each. In fact, having observed in almost every type of created thing two separate motions, he assumed, nay, he asserted, their existence in our human nature, and designated this vital antithesis Action and Reaction.

"A desire," he said, "is a fact completely accomplished in our will before it is accomplished externally."

Hence the sum total of our Volitions and our Ideas constitutes Action, and the sum total of our external acts he called Reaction.

When I subsequently read the observations made by Bichat on the duality of our external senses, I was really bewildered by my recollections, recognizing the startling coincidences between the views of that celebrated physiologist and those of Louis Lambert. They both died too young, and they had with equal steps arrived at the same strange truths. Nature has in every case been pleased to give a twofold purpose to the various apparatus that constitute her creatures; and the twofold action of the human organism, which is now ascertained beyond dispute, proves by a mass of evidence in daily life how true were Lambert's deductions as to Action and Reaction.

The inner Being, the Being of Action—the word he used to designate an unknown specialization—the mysterious nexus of fibrils to which we owe the inadequately investigated powers of thought and will—in short, the nameless entity which sees, acts, foresees the end, and accomplishes everything before expressing itself in any physical phenomenon—must, in conformity with its nature, be free from the physical conditions by which the external Being of Reaction, the visible man, is fettered in its manifestation. From this followed a multitude of logical explanations as to those results of our twofold nature which appear the strangest, and a rectification of various systems in which truth and falsehood are mingled.

Certain men, having had a glimpse of some phenomena of the natural working of the Being of Action, were, like Swedenborg, carried away above this world by their ardent soul, thirsting for poetry, and filled with the Divine Spirit. Thus,

in their ignorance of the causes and their admiration of the facts, they pleased their fancy by regarding that inner man as divine, and constructing a mystical universe. Hence we have angels! A lovely illusion which Lambert would never abandon, cherishing it even when the sword of his logic was cutting off their dazzling wings.

"Heaven," he would say, "must, after all, be the survival of our perfected faculties, and hell the void into which our unperfected faculties are cast away."

But how, then, in the ages when the understanding had preserved the religious and spiritualist impressions, which prevailed from the time of Christ till that of Descartes, between faith and doubt, how could men help accounting for the mysteries of our nature otherwise than by divine interposition? Of whom but of God Himself could sages demand an account of an invisible creature so actively and so reactively sensitive, gifted with faculties so extensive, so improvable by use, and so powerful under certain occult influences, that they could sometimes see it annihilate, by some phenomenon of sight or movement, space in its two manifestations—Time and Distance—of which the former is the space of the intellect, the latter is physical space? Sometimes they found it reconstructing the past, either by the power of retrospective vision, or by the mystery of a palingenesis not unlike the power a man might have of detecting in the form, integument, and embryo in a seed, the flowers of the past, and the numberless variations of their color, scent, and shape; and sometimes, again, it could be seen vaguely foreseeing the future, either by its apprehension of final causes, or by some phenomenon of physical presentiment.

Other men, less poetically religious, cold, and argumentative—quacks perhaps, but enthusiasts in brain at least, if not in heart—recognizing some isolated examples of such phenomena, admitted their truth while refusing to consider them as radiating from a common center. Each of these was, then, bent on constructing a science out of a simple fact. Hence arose demonology, judicial astrology, the black arts, in short, every form of divination founded on circumstances that were

essentially transient, because they varied according to men's temperament, and to conditions that are still completely unknown.

But from these errors of the learned, and from the ecclesiastical trials under which fell so many martyrs to their own powers, startling evidence was derived of the prodigious faculties at the command of the Being of Action, which, according to Lambert, can abstract itself completely from the Being of Reaction, bursting its envelope, and piercing walls by its potent vision; a phenomenon known to the Hindoos, as missionaries tell us, by the name of *Tokeiad;* or again, by another faculty, can grasp in the brain, in spite of its closest convolutions, the ideas which are formed or forming there, and the whole of past consciousness.

"If apparitions are not impossible," said Lambert, "they must be due to a faculty of discerning the ideas which represent man in his purest essence, whose life, imperishable perhaps, escapes our grosser senses, though they may become perceptible to the inner being when it has reached a high degree of ecstasy, or a great perfection of vision."

I know—though my remembrance is now vague—that Lambert, by following the results of Mind and Will step by step, after he had established their laws, accounted for a multitude of phenomena which, till then, had been regarded with reason as incomprehensible. Thus wizards, men possessed, those gifted with second sight, and demoniacs of every degree—the victims of the Middle Ages—became the subject of explanations so natural, that their very simplicity often seemed to me the seal of their truth. The marvelous gifts which the Church of Rome, jealous of all mysteries, punished with the stake, were, in Louis's opinion, the result of certain affinities between the constituent elements of matter and those of mind, which proceed from the same source. The man holding a hazel rod when he found a spring of water was guided by some antipathy or sympathy of which he was unconscious; nothing but the eccentricity of these phenomena could have availed to give some of them historic certainty.

Sympathies have rarely been proved; they afford a kind of pleasure which those who are so happy as to possess them

rarely speak of unless they are abnormally singular, and even then only in the privacy of intimate intercourse, where everything is buried. But the antipathies that arise from the inversion of affinities have, very happily, been recorded when developed in famous men. Thus, Bayle had hysterics when he heard water splashing, Scaliger turned pale at the sight of watercress, Erasmus was thrown into a fever by the smell of fish. These three antipathies were connected with water. The Duc d'Épernon fainted at the sight of a hare, Tycho-Brahe at that of a fox, Henri III. at the presence of a cat, the Maréchal d'Albret at the sight of a wild hog; these antipathies were produced by animal emanations, and often took effect at a great distance. The Chevalier de Guise, Marie de' Medici, and many other persons, have felt faint at seeing a rose even in a painting. Lord Bacon, whether he were forewarned or no of an eclipse of the moon, always fell into a syncope while it lasted; and his vitality, suspended while the phenomenon lasted, was restored as soon as it was over without his feeling any further inconvenience. These effects of antipathy, all well authenticated, and chosen from among many which history has happened to preserve, are enough to give a clew to the sympathies which remain unknown.

This fragment of Lambert's investigations, which I remember from among his essays, will throw a light on the method on which he worked. I need not emphasize the obvious connection between this theory and the collateral sciences projected by Gall and Lavater; they were its natural corollary; and every more or less scientific brain will discern the ramifications by which it is inevitably connected with the phrenological observations of one and the speculations on physiognomy of the other.

Mesmer's discovery, so important, though as yet so little appreciated, was also embodied in a single section of this treatise, though Louis did not know the Swiss doctor's writings—which are few and brief.

A simple and logical inference from these principles led him to perceive that the will might be accumulated by a contractile effort of the inner man, and then, by another

effort, projected, or even imparted, to material objects. Thus, the whole force of a man must have the property of reacting on other men, and of infusing into them an essence foreign to their own, if they could not protect themselves against such an aggression. The evidence of this theorem of the science of humanity is, of course, very multifarious; but there is nothing to establish it beyond question. We have only the notorious disaster of Marius and his harangue to the Cimbrian commanded to kill him, or the august injunction of a mother to the Lion of Florence, in historic proof of instances of such lightning flashes of mind. To Lambert, then, Will and Thought were *living forces;* and he spoke of them in such a way as to impress his belief on the hearer. To him these two forces were, in a way, visible, tangible. Thought was slow or alert, heavy or nimble, light or dark; he ascribed to it all the attributes of an active agent, and thought of it as rising, resting, waking, expanding, growing old, shrinking, becoming atrophied, or resuscitating; he described its life, and specified all its actions by the strangest words in our language, speaking of its spontaneity, its strength, and all its qualities with a kind of intuition which enabled him to recognize all the manifestations of its substantial existence.

" Often," said he, " in the midst of quiet and silence, when our inner faculties are dormant, when we have given ourselves up to sweet repose, when a sort of darkness reigns within us, and we are lost in the contemplation of things outside us, an idea suddenly flies forth, and rushes with the swiftness of lightning across the infinite space which our inner vision allows us to perceive. This radiant idea, springing into existence like a will-o'-the-wisp, dies out never to return; an ephemeral life, like that of babes who give their parents such infinite joy and sorrow; a sort of stillborn blossom in the fields of the mind. Sometimes an idea instead of springing forcibly into life and dying unembodied, dawns gradually, hovers in the unknown limbo of the organs where it has its birth; exhausts us by long gestation, develops, is itself fruitful, grows outwardly in all the grace of youth and the promising attributes of a long life; it can endure the closest inspection,

invites it, and never tires the sight; the investigation it undergoes commands the admiration we give to works slowly elaborated. Sometimes ideas are evolved in a swarm; one brings another; they come linked together; they vie with each other; they fly in clouds, wild and headlong. Again, they rise up pallid and misty, and perish for want of strength or of nutrition; the vital force is lacking. Or again, on certain days, they rush down into the depths to light up that immense obscurity; they terrify us and leave the soul dejected.

"Ideas are a complete system within us, resembling a natural kingdom, a sort of flora, of which the iconography will one day be outlined by some man who will perhaps be accounted a madman.

"Yes, within us and without, everything testifies to the livingness of those exquisite creations, which I compare with flowers in obedience to some unutterable revelation of their true nature!

"Their being produced as the final cause of man is, after all, not more amazing than the production of perfume and color in paint. Perfumes *are* ideas, perhaps!

"When we consider that the line where flesh ends and the nail begins contains the invisible and inexplicable mystery of the constant transformation of a fluid into horn, we must confess that nothing is impossible in the marvelous modifications of human tissue.

"And are there not in our inner nature phenomena of weight and motion comparable to those of physical nature? Suspense, to choose an example vividly familiar to everybody, is painful only as a result of the law in virtue of which the weight of a body is multiplied by its velocity. The weight of the feeling produced by suspense increases by the constant addition of past pain to the pain of the moment.

"And then, to what, unless it be to the electric fluid, are we to attribute the magic by which the Will enthrones itself so imperiously in the eye to demolish obstacles at the behest of genius, thunders in the voice, or filters, in spite of dissimulation, through the human frame? The current of that sovereign fluid, which, in obedience to the high pressure of thought or of feeling, flows in a torrent or is reduced to a

mere thread, and collects to flash in lightnings, is the occult agent to which are due the evil or the beneficent efforts of Art and Passion—intonation of voice, whether harsh or suave, terrible, lascivious, horrifying or seductive by turns, thrilling the heart, the nerves, or the brain at our will; the marvels of the touch, the instrument of the mental transfusions of a myriad artists, whose creative fingers are able, after passionate study, to reproduce the forms of nature; or, again, the infinite gradations of the eye from dull inertia to the emission of the most terrifying gleams.

"By this system God is bereft of none of His rights. Mind, as a form of matter, has brought me a new conviction of His greatness."

After hearing him discourse thus, after receiving into my soul his look like a ray of light, it was difficult not to be dazzled by his conviction and carried away by his arguments. The Mind appeared to me as a purely physical power, surrounded by its innumerable progeny. It was a new conception of humanity under a new form.

This brief sketch of the laws which, as Lambert maintained, constitute the formula of our intellect, must suffice to give a notion of the prodigious activity of his spirit feeding on itself. Louis had sought for proofs of his theories in the history of great men, whose lives, as set forth by their biographers, supply very curious particulars as to the operation of their understanding. His memory allowed him to recall such facts as might serve to support his statements; he had appended them to each chapter in the form of demonstrations, so as to give to many of his theories an almost mathematical certainty. The works of Cardan, a man gifted with singular powers of insight, supplied him with valuable materials. He had not forgotten that Apollonius of Tyana had, in Asia, announced the death of the tyrant with every detail of his execution, at the very hour when it was taking place in Rome; nor that Plotinus, when far away from Porphyrius, was aware of his friend's intention to kill himself, and flew to dissuade him; nor the incident in the last century, proved in the face of the most incredulous mockery ever known —an incident most surprising to men who were accustomed

to regard doubt as a weapon against the fact alone, but simple enough to believers—the fact that Alphonzo-Maria di Liguori, Bishop of Saint-Agatha, administered consolations to Pope Ganganelli, who saw him, heard him, and answered him, while the Bishop himself, at a great distance from Rome, was in a trance at home, in the chair where he commonly sat on his return from Mass. On recovering consciousness, he saw all his attendants kneeling beside him, believing him to be dead: "My friends," said he, "the Holy Father is just dead." Two days later a letter confirmed the news. The hour of the Pope's death coincided with that when the Bishop had been restored to his natural state.

Nor had Lambert omitted the yet more recent adventure of an English girl who was passionately attached to a sailor, and set out from London to seek him. She found him, without a guide, making her way alone in the North American wilderness, reaching him just in time to save his life.

Louis had found confirmatory evidence in the mysteries of the ancients, in the acts of the martyrs—in which glorious instances may be found of the triumph of human will, in the demonology of the Middle Ages, in criminal trials and medical researches; always selecting the real fact, the probable phenomenon, with admirable sagacity.

All this rich collection of scientific anecdotes, culled from so many books, most of them worthy of credit, served no doubt to wrap parcels in; and this work, which was curious, to say the least of it, as the outcome of a most extraordinary memory, was doomed to destruction.

Among the various cases which added to the value of Lambert's *Treatise* was an incident that had taken place in his own family, of which he had told me before he wrote his essay. This fact, bearing on the post-existence of the inner man, if I may be allowed to coin a new word for a phenomenon hitherto nameless, struck me so forcibly that I have never forgotten it. His father and mother were being forced into a lawsuit, of which the loss would leave them with a stain on their good name, the only thing they had in the world. Hence their anxiety was very great when the question first arose as to whether they should yield to the plaintiff's

unjust demands, or should defend themselves against him. The matter came under discussion one autumn evening, before a turf fire in the room used by the tanner and his wife. Two or three relations were invited to this family council, and among others Louis's maternal great-grandfather, an old laborer, much bent, but with a venerable and dignified countenance, bright eyes, and a bald, yellow head, on which grew a few locks of thin, white hair. Like the Obi of the Negroes, or the Sagamore of the Indian savage, he was a sort of oracle, consulted on important occasions. His land was tilled by his grandchildren, who fed and served him; he predicted rain and fine weather, and told them when to mow the hay and gather the crops. The barometric exactitude of his forecasts was quite famous, and added to the confidence and respect he inspired. For whole days he would sit immovable in his armchair. This state of rapt meditation often came upon him since his wife's death; he had been attached to her with the truest and most faithful affection.

This discussion was held in his presence, but he did not seem to give much heed to it.

"My children," said he, when he was asked for his opinion, "this is too serious a matter for me to decide on alone. I must go and consult my wife."

The old man rose, took his stick, and went out, to the great astonishment of the others, who thought him daft. He presently came back and said—

"I did not have to go so far as the graveyard; your mother came to meet me; I found her by the brook. She tells me that you will find some receipts in the hands of a notary at Blois, which will enable you to gain your suit."

The words were spoken in a firm tone; the old man's demeanor and countenance showed that such an apparition was habitual with him. In fact, the disputed receipts were found, and the lawsuit was not attempted.

This event, under his father's roof and to his own knowledge, when Louis was nine years old, contributed largely to his belief in Swedenborg's miraculous visions, for in the course of that philosopher's life he repeatedly gave proofs of the power of sight developed in his Inner Being. As he grew

older, and as his intelligence was developed, Lambert was naturally led to seek in the laws of nature for the causes of the miracle which, in his childhood, had captivated his attention. What name can be given to the chance which brought within his ken so many facts and books bearing on such phenomena, and made him the principal subject and actor in such marvelous manifestations of mind?

If Lambert had no other title to fame than the fact of his having formulated, in his sixteenth year, such a psychological dictum as this:—" The events which bear witness to the action of the human race, and are the outcome of its intellect, have causes by which they are preconceived, as our actions are accomplished in our mind before they are reproduced by the outer man; presentiments or predictions are the perception of these causes "—I think we may deplore in him a genius equal to Pascal, Lavoisier, or Laplace. His chimerical notions about angels perhaps overruled his work too long; but was it not in trying to make gold that the alchemists unconsciously created chemistry? At the same time, Lambert, at a later period, studied comparative anatomy, physics, geometry, and other sciences bearing on his discoveries, and this was undoubtedly with the purpose of collecting facts and submitting them to analysis—the only torch that can guide us through the dark places of the most inscrutable work of nature. He had too much good sense to dwell among the clouds of theories which can all be expressed in a few words. In our day, is not the simplest demonstration based on facts more highly esteemed than the most specious system though defended by more or less ingenious inductions? But as I did not know him at the period of his life when his cogitations were, no doubt, the most productive of results, I can only conjecture what the bent of his work must have been from that of his first efforts of thought.

It is easy to see where his *Treatise on the Will* was faulty. Though gifted already with the powers which characterize superior men, he was but a boy. His brain, though endowed with a great faculty for abstractions, was still full of the delightful beliefs that hover around youth. Thus his conception, while at some points it touched the ripest fruits of

his genius, still, by many more, clung to the smaller elements of its germs. To certain readers, lovers of poetry, what he chiefly lacked must have been a certain vein of interest.

But his work bore the stamp of the struggle that was going on in that noble Spirit between the two great principles of Spiritualism and Materialism, round which so many a fine genius has beaten its way without ever daring to amalgamate them. Louis, at first purely Spiritualist, had been irresistibly led to recognize the Material conditions of Mind. Confounded by the facts of analysis at the moment when his heart still gazed with yearning at the clouds that floated in Swedenborg's heaven, he had not yet acquired the necessary powers to produce a coherent system, compactly cast in a piece, as it were. Hence certain inconsistencies that have left their stamp even on the sketch here given of his first attempts. Still, incomplete as his work may have been, was it not the rough copy of a science of which he would have investigated the secrets at a later time, have secured the foundations, have examined, deduced, and connected the logical sequence?

Six months after the confiscation of the *Treatise on the Will* I left school. Our parting was unexpected. My mother, alarmed by a feverish attack which for some months I had been unable to shake off, while my inactive life induced symptoms of coma, carried me off at four or five hours' notice. The announcement of my departure reduced Lambert to dreadful dejection.

"Shall I ever see you again?" said he in his gentle voice, as he clasped me in his arms. "You will live," he went on, "but I shall die. If I can, I will come back to you."

Only the young can utter such words with the accent of conviction that gives them the impressiveness of prophecy, of a pledge, leaving a terror of its fulfillment. For a long time indeed I vaguely looked for the promised apparition. Even now there are days of depression, of doubt, alarm, and loneliness, when I am forced to repel the intrusion of that sad parting, though it was not fated to be the last.

When I crossed the yard by which we left, Lambert was at one of the refectory windows to see me pass. By my request

my mother obtained leave for him to dine with us at the inn, and in the evening I escorted him back to the fatal gate of the college. No lover and his mistress ever shed more tears at parting.

"Well, good-by; I shall be left alone in this desert!" said he, pointing to the playground where two hundred boys were disporting themselves and shouting. "When I come back half dead with fatigue from my long excursions through the fields of thought, on whose heart can I rest? I could tell you everything in a look. Who will understand me now?—Good-by! I could wish I had never met you; I should not know all I am losing."

"And what is to become of me?" said I. "Is not my position a dreadful one? *I* have nothing here to uphold me!" and I slapped my forehead.

He shook his head with a gentle gesture, gracious and sad, and we parted.

At that time Louis Lambert was about five feet five inches in height; he grew no more. His countenance, which was full of expression, revealed his sweet nature. Divine patience, developed by harsh usage, and the constant concentration needed for his meditative life, had bereft his eyes of the audacious pride which is so attractive in some faces, and which had so shocked our masters. Peaceful mildness gave charm to his face, an exquisite serenity that was never marred by a tinge of irony or satire; for his natural kindliness tempered his conscious strength and superiority. He had pretty hands, very slender, and almost always moist. His frame was a marvel, a model for a sculptor; but our iron-gray uniform, with gilt buttons and knee-breeches, gave us such an ungainly appearance that Lambert's fine proportions and firm muscles could only be appreciated in the bath. When we swam in our pool in the Loir, Louis was conspicuous by the whiteness of his skin, which was unlike the different shades of our schoolfellows' bodies mottled by the cold, or blue from the water. Gracefully formed, elegant in his attitudes, delicate in hue, never shivering after his bath, perhaps because he avoided the shade and always ran into the sunshine, Louis was like one of those cautious blossoms that close their

petals to the blast and refuse to open unless to a clear sky. He ate little, and drank water only; either by instinct or by choice he was averse to any exertion that made a demand on his strength; his movements were few and simple, like those of Orientals or of savages, with whom gravity seems a condition of nature.

As a rule, he disliked everything that resembled any special care for his person. He commonly sat with his head a little inclined to the left, and so constantly rested his elbows on the table, that the sleeves of his coats were soon in holes.

To this slight picture of the outer man I must add a sketch of his moral qualities, for I believe I can now judge him impartially.

Though naturally religious, Louis did not accept the minute practices of the Roman ritual; his ideas were more intimately in sympathy with Saint Theresa and Fénelon, and several Fathers and certain Saints, who, in our day, would be regarded as heresiarchs or atheists. He was rigidly calm during the services. His own prayers went up in gusts, in aspirations, without any regular formality; in all things he gave himself up to nature, and would not pray, any more than he would think, at any fixed hour. In chapel he was equally apt to think of God or to meditate on some problem of philosophy.

To him Jesus Christ was the most perfect type of his system. *Et Verbum caro factum est* seemed a sublime statement intended to express the traditional formula of the Will, the Word, and the Act made visible. Christ's unconsciousness of His Death—having so perfected His inner Being by divine works, that one day the invisible form of it appeared to His disciples—and the other Mysteries of the Gospels, the magnetic cures wrought by Christ, and the gift of tongues, all to him confirmed his doctrine. I remember once hearing him say on this subject, that the greatest work that could be written nowadays was a History of the Primitive Church. And he never rose to such poetic heights as when, in the evening, as we conversed, he would enter on an inquiry into miracles worked by the power of Will during that great age of faith. He discerned the strongest evidence of his theory

in most of the martyrdoms endured during the first century of our era, which he spoke of as *the great era of the Mind.*

"Do not the phenomena observed in almost every instance of the torments so heroically endured by the early Christians for the establishment of the faith, amply prove that Material force will never prevail against the force of Ideas or the Will of man?" he would say. "From this effect, produced by the Will of all, each man may draw conclusions in favor of his own."

I need say nothing of his views on poetry or history, nor of his judgment on the masterpieces of our language. There would be little interest in the record of opinions now almost universally held, though at that time, from the lips of a boy, they might seem remarkable. Louis was capable of the highest flights. To give a notion of his talents in two words, he could have written *Zadig* as wittily as Voltaire; he could have thought out the Dialogue between Sylla and Eucrates as powerfully as Montesquieu. His rectitude of character made him desire above all else in a work that it should bear the stamp of utility; at the same time, his refined taste demanded novelty of thought as well as of form. One of his most remarkable literary observations, which will serve as a clew to all the others, and show the lucidity of his judgment, is this, which has ever dwelt in my memory, "The Apocalypse is written ecstasy." He regarded the Bible as a part of the traditional history of the antediluvian nations which had taken for its share the new humanity. He thought that the mythology of the Greeks was borrowed both from the Hebrew Scriptures and from the sacred Books of India, adapted after their own fashion by the beauty-loving Hellenes.

"It is impossible," said he, "to doubt the priority of the Asiatic Scriptures; they are earlier than our Sacred Books. The man who is candid enough to admit this historical fact sees the whole world expand before him. Was it not on the Asiatic highland that the few men took refuge who were able to escape the catastrophe that ruined our globe—if, indeed, men had existed before that cataclysm or shock? A serious query, the answer to which lies at the bottom of the sea. The anthropogony of the Bible is merely a genealogy of a

swarm escaping from the human hive which settled on the mountainous slopes of Thibet between the summits of the Himalaya and the Caucasus.

" The character of the primitive ideas of that horde, called by its lawgiver the people of God, no doubt to secure its unity, and perhaps also to induce it to maintain his laws and his system of government—for the Books of Moses are a religious, political, and civil code—that character bears the authority of terror; convulsions of nature are interpreted with stupendous power as a vengeance from on high. In fact, since this wandering tribe knew none of the ease enjoyed by a community settled in a patriarchal home, their sorrows as pilgrims inspired them with none but gloomy poems, majestic but blood-stained. In the Hindoos, on the contrary, the spectacle of the rapid recoveries of the natural world, and the prodigious effects of sunshine, which they were the first to recognize, gave rise to happy images of blissful love, to the worship of Fire and of the endless personifications of reproductive force. These fine fancies are lacking in the Book of the Hebrews. A constant need of self-preservation amid all the dangers and the lands they traversed to reach the Promised Land engendered their exclusive race-feeling and their hatred of all other nations.

" These three Scriptures are the archives of an engulfed world. Therein lies the secret of the extraordinary splendor of those languages and their myths. A grand human history lies beneath those names of men and places, and those fables which charm us so irresistibly, we know not why. Perhaps it is because we find in them the native air of renewed humanity."

Thus, to him, this threefold literature included all the thoughts of man. Not a book could be written, in his opinion, of which the subject might not there be discerned in its germ. This view shows how learnedly he had pursued his early studies of the Bible, and how far they had led him. Hovering, as it were, over the heads of society, and knowing it solely from books, he could judge it coldly.

" The law," said he, " never puts a check on the enterprises of the rich and great, but crushes the poor, who, on the contrary, need protection."

His kind heart did not therefore allow him to sympathize in political ideas; his system led rather to the passive obedience of which Jesus set the example. During the last hours of my life at Vendôme, Louis had ceased to feel the spur to glory; he had, in a way, had an abstract enjoyment of fame; and having opened it, as the ancient priests of sacrifice sought to read the future in the hearts of men, he had found nothing in the entrails of his chimera. Scorning a sentiment so wholly personal: "Glory," said he, "is but beatified egoism."

Here, perhaps, before taking leave of this exceptional boyhood, I may pronounce judgment on it by a rapid glance.

A short time before our separation, Lambert said to me:—

"Apart from the general laws which I have formulated—and this, perhaps, will be my glory—laws which must be those of the human organism, the life of man is Movement determined in each individual by the pressure of some inscrutable influence—by the brain, the heart, or the sinews. All the innumerable modes of human existence result from the proportions in which these three generating forces are more or less intimately combined with the substances they assimilate in the environment they live in."

He stopped short, struck his forehead, and exclaimed: "How strange! In every great man whose portrait I have remarked, the neck is short. Perhaps nature requires that in them the heart should be nearer to the brain!"

Then he went on:—

"From that, a sum-total of action takes its rise which constitutes social life. The man of sinew contributes action or strength; the man of brain, genius; the man of heart, faith. But," he added sadly, "faith sees only the clouds of the sanctuary; the angel alone has light."

So, according to his own definitions, Lambert was all brain and all heart. It seems to me that his intellectual life was divided into three marked phases.

Under the impulsion, from his earliest years, of a precocious activity, due, no doubt, to some malady—or to some special perfection—of organism, his powers were concentrated on the functions of the inner senses and a super-

abundant flow of nerve fluid. As a man of ideas, he craved to satisfy the thirst of his brain, to assimilate every idea. Hence his reading; and from his reading, the reflections that gave him the power of reducing things to their simplest expression, and of absorbing them to study them in their essence. Thus, the advantages of this splendid stage, acquired by other men only after long study, were achieved by Lambert during his bodily childhood: a happy childhood, colored by the studious joys of a born poet.

The point which most thinkers reach at last was to him the starting-point, whence his brain was to set out one day in search of new worlds of knowledge. Though as yet he knew it not, he had made for himself the most exacting life possible, and the most insatiably greedy. Merely to live, was he not compelled to be perpetually casting nutriment into the gulf he had opened in himself? Like some beings who dwell in the grosser world, might he not die of inanition for want of feeding abnormal and disappointed cravings? Was not this a sort of debauchery of the intellect which might lead to spontaneous combustion, like that of bodies saturated with alcohol?

I had seen nothing of this first phase of his brain-development; it is only now, at a later day, that I can thus give an account of its prodigious fruit and results. Lambert was now thirteen.

I was so fortunate as to witness the first stage of the second period. Lambert was cast into all the miseries of school life—and that, perhaps, was his salvation—it absorbed the superabundance of his thoughts. After passing from concrete ideas to their purest expression, from words to their ideal import, and from that import to principles, after reducing everything to the abstract, to enable him to live he yearned for yet other intellectual creations. Quelled by the woes of school and the critical development of his physical constitution, he became thoughtful, dreamed of feeling, and caught a glimpse of new sciences—positively masses of ideas. Checked in his career, and not yet strong enough to contemplate the higher spheres, he contemplated his inmost self. I then perceived in him the struggle of the Mind reacting on

itself, and trying to detect the secrets of its own nature, like a physician who watches the course of his own disease.

At this stage of weakness and strength, of childish grace and superhuman powers, Louis Lambert is the creature who, more than any other, gave me a poetical and truthful image of the being we call an angel, always excepting one woman whose name, whose features, whose identity, and whose life I would fain hide from all the world, so as to be sole master of the secret of her existence, and to bury it in the depths of my heart.

The third phase I was not destined to see. It began when Lambert and I were parted, for he did not leave college till he was eighteen, in the summer of 1815. He had at that time lost his father and mother about six months before. Finding no member of his family with whom his soul could sympathize, expansive still, but, since our parting, thrown back on himself, he made his home with his uncle, who was also his guardian, and who, having been turned out of his benefice as a priest who had taken the oaths, had come to settle at Blois. There Louis lived for some time; but consumed ere long by the desire to finish his incomplete studies, he came to Paris to see Mme. de Staël, and to drink of science at its highest font. The old priest, being very fond of his nephew, left Louis free to spend his whole little inheritance in his three years' stay in Paris, though he lived very poorly. This fortune consisted of but a few thousand francs.

Lambert returned to Blois at the beginning of 1820, driven from Paris by the sufferings to which the impecunious are exposed there. He must often have been a victim to the secret storms, the terrible rage of mind by which artists are tossed, to judge from the only fact his uncle recollected, and the only letter he preserved of all those which Louis Lambert wrote to him at that time, perhaps because it was the last and the longest.

To begin with the story. Louis one evening was at the Théâtre-Français, seated on a bench in the upper gallery, near to one of the pillars which, in those days, divided off the third row of boxes. On rising between the acts, he saw a

young woman who had just come into the box next him. The sight of this lady, who was young, pretty, well dressed, in a low bodice no doubt, and escorted by a man for whom her face beamed with all the charms of love, produced such a terrible effect on Lambert's soul and senses, that he was obliged to leave the theater. If he had not been controlled by some remaining glimmer of reason, which was not wholly extinguished by this first fever of burning passion, he might perhaps have yielded to the almost irresistible desire that came over him to kill the young man on whom the lady's looks beamed. Was not this a reversion, in the heart of the Paris world, to the savage passion that regards woman as its prey, an effect of animal instinct combining with the almost luminous flashes of a soul crushed under the weight of thought? In short, was it not the prick of the penknife so vividly imagined by the boy, felt by the man as the thunderbolt of his most vital craving—for love?

And now, here is the letter that depicts the state of his mind as it was struck by the spectacle of Parisian civilization. His feelings, perpetually wounded no doubt in that whirlpool of self-interest, must always have suffered there; he probably had no friend to comfort him, no enemy to give tone to his life. Compelled to live in himself alone, having no one to share his subtle raptures, he may have hoped to solve the problem of his destiny by a life of ecstasy, adopting an almost vegetative attitude, like an anchorite of the early Church, and abdicating the empire of the intellectual world.

This letter seems to hint at such a scheme, which is a temptation to all lofty souls at periods of social reform. But is not this purpose, in some cases, the result of a vocation? Do not some of them endeavor to concentrate their powers by long silence, so as to emerge fully capable of governing the world by word or by deed? Louis must, assuredly, have found much bitterness in his intercourse with men, or have striven hard with Society in terrible irony, without extracting anything from it, before uttering so strident a cry, and expressing, poor fellow, the desire which satiety of power and of all earthly things has led even monarchs to indulge!

And perhaps, too, he went back to solitude to carry out

some great work that was floating inchoate in his brain. We would gladly believe it as we read this fragment of his thoughts, betraying the struggle of his soul at the time when youth was ending and the terrible power of production was coming into being, to which we might have owed the works of the man.

This letter connects itself with the adventure at the theater. The incident and the letter throw light on each other, body and soul were tuned to the same pitch. This tempest of doubts and asseverations, of clouds and of lightnings that flash before the thunder, ending by a starved yearning for heavenly illumination, throws such a light on the third phase of his education as enables us to understand it perfectly. As we read these lines, written at chance moments, taken up when the vicissitudes of life in Paris allowed, may we not fancy that we see an oak at that stage of its growth when its inner expansion bursts the tender green bark, covering it with wrinkles and cracks, when its majestic stature is in preparation—if indeed the lightnings of heaven and the ax of man shall spare it?

This letter, then, will close, alike for the poet and the philosopher, this portentous childhood and unappreciated youth. It finishes off the outline of this nature in its germ. Philosophers will regret the foliage frost-nipped in the bud; but they will, perhaps, find the flowers expanding in regions far above the highest places of the earth.

"Paris, *September-October* 1819.

"Dear Uncle:—I shall soon be leaving this part of the world, where I could never bear to live. I find no one here who likes what I like, who works at my work, or who is amazed at what amazes me. Thrown back on myself, I eat my heart out in misery. My long and patient study of Society here has brought me to melancholy conclusions, in which doubt predominates.

"Here, money is the mainspring of everything. Money is indispensable, even for going without money. But though that dross is necessary to anyone who wishes to think in peace, I have not courage enough to make it the sole motive

power of my thoughts. To make a fortune, I must take up a profession; in two words, I must, by acquiring some privilege of position or of self-advertisement, either legal or ingeniously contrived, purchase the right of taking day by day out of somebody else's purse a certain sum which, by the end of the year, would amount to a small capital; and this, in twenty years, would hardly secure an income of four or five thousand francs to a man who deals honestly. An advocate, a notary, a merchant, any recognized professional, has earned a living for his later days in the course of fifteen or sixteen years after ending his apprenticeship.

"But I have never felt fit for work of this kind. I prefer thought to action, an idea to a transaction, contemplation to activity. I am absolutely devoid of the constant attention indispensable to the making of a fortune. Any mercantile venture, any need for using other people's money would bring me to grief, and I should be ruined. Though I have nothing, at least at the moment, I owe nothing. The man who gives his life to the achievement of great things in the sphere of intellect, needs very little; still, though twenty sous a day would be enough, I do not possess that small income for my laborious idleness. When I wish to cogitate, want drives me out of the sanctuary where my mind has its being. What is to become of me?

"I am not frightened at poverty. If it were not that beggars are imprisoned, branded, scorned, I would beg, to enable me to solve at my leisure the problems that haunt me. Still, this sublime resignation, by which I might emancipate my mind, through abstracting it from my body, would not serve my end. I should still need money to devote myself to certain experiments. But for that, I would accept the outward indigence of a sage possessed of both heaven and earth. A man need only never stoop, to remain lofty in poverty. He who struggles and endures, while marching on to a glorious end, presents a noble spectacle; but who can have the strength to fight here? We can climb cliffs, but it is unendurable to remain forever tramping the mud. Everything here checks the flight of a spirit that strives towards the future.

"I should not be afraid of myself in a desert cave; I am

afraid of myself here. In the desert I should be alone with myself, undisturbed; here man has a thousand wants which drag him down. You go out walking, absorbed in dreams; the voice of the beggar asking an alms brings you back to this world of hunger and thirst. You need money only to take a walk. Your organs of sense, perpetually wearied by trifles, never get any rest. The poet's sensitive nerves are perpetually shocked, and what ought to be his glory becomes his torment; his imagination is his cruelest enemy. The injured workman, the poor mother in childbed, the prostitute who has fallen ill, the foundling, the infirm and aged—even vice and crime here find a refuge and charity; but the world is merciless to the inventor, to the man who thinks. Here everything must show an immediate and practical result. Fruitless attempts are mocked at, though they may lead to the greatest discoveries; the deep and untiring study that demands long concentration of every faculty is not valued here. The State might pay talent as it pays the bayonet; but it is afraid of being taken in by mere cleverness, as if genius could be counterfeited for any length of time.

"Ah, my dear uncle, when monastic solitude was destroyed, uprooted from its home at the foot of mountains, under green and silent shade, asylums ought to have been provided for those suffering souls who, by an idea, promote the progress of nations or prepare some new and fruitful development of science.

"September 20th.

"The love of study brought me hither, as you know. I have met really learned men, amazing for the most part; but the lack of unity in scientific work almost nullifies their efforts. There is no Head of instruction or of scientific research. At the Museum a professor argues to prove that another in the Rue Saint-Jacques talks nonsense. The lecturer at the College of Medicine abuses him of the Collège de France. When I first arrived, I went to hear an old Academician who taught five hundred youths that Corneille was a haughty and powerful genius; Racine, elegiac and graceful; Molière, inimitable; Voltaire, supremely witty;

Bossuet and Pascal, incomparable in argument. A professor of philosophy may make a name by explaining how Plato is Platonic. Another discourses on the history of words, without troubling himself about ideas. One explains Æschylus, another tells you that communes were communes, and neither more nor less. These original and brilliant discoveries, diluted to last several hours, constitute the higher education which is to lead to giant strides in human knowledge.

"If the Government could have an idea, I should suspect it of being afraid of any real superiority, which, once roused, might bring Society under the yoke of an intelligent rule. Then nations would go too far and too fast; so professors are appointed to produce simpletons. How else can we account for a scheme devoid of method or any notion of the future?

"The Institut might be the central government of the moral and intellectual world; but it has been ruined lately by its subdivision into separate academies. So human science marches on, without a guide, without a system, and floats haphazard with no road traced out.

"This vagueness and uncertainty prevails in politics as well as in science. In the order of nature means are simple, the end is grand and marvelous; here in science, as in government, the means are stupendous, the end is mean. The force which in nature proceeds at an equal pace, and of which the sum is constantly being added to itself—the A+A from which everything is produced—is destructive in society. Politics, at the present time, place human forces in antagonism to neutralize each other, instead of combining them to promote their action to some definite end.

"Looking at Europe alone, from Cæsar to Constantine, from the puny Constantine to the great Attila, from the Huns to Charlemagne, from Charlemagne to Leo X., from Leo X. to Philip II., from Philip II. to Louis XIV., from Venice to England, from England to Napoleon, from Napoleon to England, I see no fixed purpose in politics; its constant agitation has led to no progress.

"Nations leave witnesses to their greatness in monuments,

and to their happiness in the welfare of individuals. Are modern monuments as fine as those of the ancients? I doubt it. The arts, which are the direct outcome of the individual, the products of genius or of handicraft, have not advanced much. The pleasures of Lucullus were as good as those of Samuel Bernard, of Beaujon, or of the King of Bavaria. And then human longevity has diminished.

"Thus, to those who will be candid, man is still the same; might is still his only law, and success his only wisdom.

"Jesus Christ, Mahomet, and Luther, only lent a different hue to the arena in which youthful nations disport themselves.

"No development of politics has hindered civilization, with its riches, its manners, its alliance of the strong against the weak, its ideas, and its delights, from moving from Memphis to Tyre, from Tyre to Baalbek, from Tadmor to Carthage, from Carthage to Rome, from Rome to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Venice, from Venice to Spain, from Spain to England—while no trace is left of Memphis, of Tyre, of Carthage, of Rome, of Venice, or Madrid. The soul of those great bodies has fled. Not one of them has preserved itself from destruction, nor formulated this axiom: When the effect produced ceases to be in a ratio to its cause, disorganization follows.

"The most subtle genius can discover no common bond between great social facts. No political theory has ever lasted. Governments pass away, as men do, without handing down any lesson, and no system gives birth to a system better than that which came before it. What can we say about politics when a Government directly referred to God perished in India and Egypt; when the rule of the Sword and of the Tiara are past; when Monarchy is dying; when the Government of the People has never been alive; when no scheme of intellectual power as applied to material interests has ever proved durable, and everything at this day remains to be done all over again, as it has been at every period when man has turned to cry out, 'I am in torment!'

"The Code, which is considered Napoleon's greatest achievement, is the most Draconian work I know of. Terri-

torial subdivision carried out to the uttermost, and its principle confirmed by the equal division of property generally, must result in the degeneracy of the nation and the death of the Arts and Sciences. The land, too much broken up, is cultivated only with cereals and small crops; the forests, and consequently the rivers, are disappearing; oxen and horses are no longer bred. Means are lacking both for attack and for resistance. If we should be invaded, the people must be crushed; it has lost its mainspring—its leaders. This is the history of deserts!

"Thus the science of politics has no definite principles, and it can have no fixity; it is the spirit of the hour, the perpetual application of strength proportioned to the necessities of the moment. The man who should foresee two centuries ahead would die on the place of execution, loaded with the imprecations of the mob, or else—which seems worse—would be lashed with the myriad whips of ridicule. Nations are but individuals, neither wiser nor stronger than man, and their destinies are identical. If we reflect on man, is not that to consider mankind?

"By studying the spectacle of society perpetually storm-tossed in its foundations as well as in its results, in its causes as well as in its actions, while philanthropy is but a splendid mistake, and progress is vanity, I have been confirmed in this truth: Life is within and not without us; to rise above men, to govern them, is only the part of an aggrandized schoolmaster; and those men who are capable of rising to the level whence they can enjoy a view of the world should not look at their own feet.

"November 4th.

"I am no doubt occupied with weighty thoughts, I am on the way to certain discoveries, an invincible power bears me toward a luminary which shone at an early age on the darkness of my moral life; but what name can I give to the power that ties my hands and shuts my mouth, and drags me in a direction opposite to my vocation? I must leave Paris, bid farewell to the books in the libraries, those noble centers of illumination, those kindly and always accessible sages, and the

younger geniuses with whom I sympathize. Who is it that drives me away? Chance or Providence?

"The two ideas represented by those words are irreconcilable. If Chance does not exist, we must admit fatalism, that is to say, the compulsory co-ordination of things under the rule of a general plan. Why then do we rebel? If man is not free, what becomes of the scaffolding of his moral sense? Or, if he can control his destiny, if by his own free-will he can interfere with the execution of the general plan, what becomes of God?

"Why did I come here? If I examine myself, I find the answer: I find in myself axioms that need developing. But why then have I such vast faculties without being suffered to use them? If my suffering could serve as an example, I could understand it; but no, I suffer unknown.

"This is perhaps as much the act of Providence as the fate of the flower that dies unseen in the heart of the virgin forest, where no one can enjoy its perfume or admire its splendor. Just as that blossom vainly sheds its fragrance to the solitude, so do I, here in a garret, give birth to ideas that no one can grasp.

"Yesterday evening I sat eating bread and grapes in front of my window with a young doctor named Meyraux. We talked as men do whom misfortune has joined in brotherhood, and I said to him—

"'I am going away; you are staying. Take up my ideas and develop them.'

"'I cannot!' said he, with bitter regret; 'my feeble health cannot stand so much work, and I shall die young of my struggle with penury.'

"We looked up at the sky and grasped hands. We first met at the Comparative Anatomy course, and in the galleries of the Museum, attracted thither by the same study—the unity of geological structure. In him this was the presentiment of genius sent to open a new path in the fallows of intellect; in me it was a deduction from a general system.

"My point is to ascertain the real relation that may exist between God and man: Is not this a need of the age? Without the highest assurance, it is impossible to put bit and

bridle on the social factions that have been let loose by the spirit of skepticism and discussion, and which are now crying aloud: 'Show us a way in which we may walk and find no pitfalls in our way!'

"You will wonder what comparative anatomy has to do with a question of such importance to the future of society. Must we not attain to the conviction that man is the end of all earthly means before we ask whether he too is not the means to some end? If man is bound up with everything, is there not something above him with which he again is bound up? If he is the end-all of the unexplained transmutations that lead up to him, must he not be also the link between the visible and invisible creations?

"The activity of the universe is not absurd; it must tend to an end, and that end is surely not a social body constituted as ours is! There is a fearful gulf between us and heaven. In our present existence we can neither be always happy nor always in torment; must there not be some tremendous change to bring about Paradise and Hell, two images without which God cannot exist to the mind of the vulgar? I know that a compromise was made by the invention of the Soul; but it is repugnant to me to make God answerable for human baseness, for our disenchantments, our aversions, our degeneracy.

"Again, how can we recognize as divine the principle within us which can be overthrown by a few glasses of rum? How conceive of immaterial faculties which matter can conquer, and whose exercise is suspended by a grain of opium? How imagine that we shall be able to feel when we are bereft of the vehicles of sensation? Why must God perish if matter can be proved to think? Is the vitality of matter in its innumerable manifestations—the effect of its instincts—at all more explicable than the effects of the mind? Is not the motion given to the worlds enough to prove God's existence, without our plunging into absurd speculations suggested by pride? And if we pass, after our trials, from a perishable state of being to a higher existence, is not that enough for a creature that is distinguished from other creatures only by more perfect instincts? If in moral philosophy there is not a single principle which does not lead to the absurd, or

cannot be disproved by evidence, is it not high time that we should set to work to seek such dogmas as are written in the innermost nature of things? Must we not reverse philosophical science?

"We trouble ourselves very little about the supposed void that must have pre-existed for us, and we try to fathom the supposed void that lies before us. We make God responsible for the future, but we do not expect Him to account for the past. And yet it is quite as desirable to know whether we have any roots in the past as to discover whether we are inseparable from the future.

"We have been Deists or Atheists in one direction only.

"Is the world eternal? Was the world created? We can conceive of no middle term between these two propositions; one, then, is true and the other false! Take your choice. Whichever it may be, God, as our reason depicts Him, must be deposed, and that amounts to denial. The world is eternal: then, beyond question, God has had it forced upon Him. The world was created: then God is an impossibility. How could He have subsisted through an eternity, not knowing that He would presently want to create the world? How could He have failed to foresee all the results?

"Whence did He derive the essence of creation? Evidently from Himself. If, then, the world proceeds from God, how can you account for evil? That Evil should proceed from Good is absurd. If evil does not exist, what do you make of social life and its laws? On all hands we find a precipice! On every side a gulf in which reason is lost! Then social science must be altogether reconstructed.

"Listen to me, uncle; until some splendid genius shall have taken account of the obvious inequality of intellects and the general sense of humanity, the word God will be constantly arraigned, and Society will rest on shifting sands. The secret of the various moral zones through which man passes will be discovered by the analysis of the animal type as a whole. That animal type has hitherto been studied with reference only to its differences, not to its similitudes; in its organic manifestations, not in its faculties. Animal faculties are perfected in direct transmission, in obedience to laws

which remain to be discovered. These faculties correspond to the forces which express them, and those forces are essentially material and divisible.

"Material faculties! Reflect on this juxtaposition of words. Is not this a problem as insoluble as that of the first communication of motion to matter—an unsounded gulf of which the difficulties were transposed rather than removed by Newton's system? Again, the universal assimilation of light by everything that exists on earth demands a new study of our globe. The same animal differs in the tropics of India and in the North. Under the angular or the vertical incidence of the sun's rays nature is developed the same, but not the same; identical in its principles, but totally dissimilar in its outcome. The phenomenon that amazes our eyes in the zoological world when we compare the butterflies of Brazil with those of Europe, is even more startling in the world of Mind. A particular facial angle, a certain amount of brain convolutions, are indispensable to produce Columbus, Raphael, Napoleon, Laplace, or Beethoven; the sunless valley produces the cretin—draw your own conclusions. Why such differences, due to the more or less ample diffusion of light to men? The masses of suffering humanity, more or less active, fed, and enlightened, are a difficulty to be accounted for, crying out against God.

"Why in great joy do we always want to quit the earth? whence comes the longing to rise which every creature has known or will know? Motion is a great Soul, and its alliance with matter is just as difficult to account for as the origin of thought in man. In these days science is one; it is impossible to touch politics independent of moral questions, and these are bound up with scientific questions. It seems to me that we are on the eve of a great human struggle; the forces are there; only I do not see the General.

"*November 25th.*

"Believe me, dear uncle, it is hard to give up the life that is in us without a pang. I am returning to Blois with a heavy grip at my heart; I shall die then, taking with me some useful truths. No personal interest debases my regrets. Is

earthly fame a guerdon to those who believe that they will mount to a higher sphere?

"I am by no means in love with the two syllables *Lam* and *bert;* whether spoken with respect or with contempt over my grave, they can make no change in my ultimate destiny. I feel myself strong and energetic; I might become a power; I feel in myself a life so luminous that it might enlighten a world, and yet I am shut up in a sort of mineral, as perhaps indeed are the colors you admire on the neck of an Indian bird. I should need to embrace the whole world, to clasp and re-create it; but those who have done this, who have thus embraced and remolded it began—did they not?—by being a wheel in the machine. I can only be crushed. Mahomet had the sword; Jesus had the cross; I shall die unknown. I shall be at Blois for a day, and then in my coffin.

"Do you know why I have come back to Swedenborg after vast studies of all religions, and after proving to myself, by reading all the works published within the last sixty years by the patient English, by Germany, and by France, how deeply true were my youthful views about the Bible? Swedenborg undoubtedly epitomizes all the religions—or rather the one religion—of humanity. Though forms of worship are infinitely various, neither their true meaning nor their metaphysical interpretation has ever varied. In short, man has, and has had, but one religion.

"Sivaism, Vishnuism, and Brahmanism, the three primitive creeds, originating as they did in Thibet, in the valley of the Indus, and on the vast plains of the Ganges, ended their warfare some thousand years before the birth of Christ by adopting the Hindoo Trimourti. The Trimourti is our Trinity. From this dogma Magianism arose in Persia; in Egypt, the African beliefs and the Mosaic law; the worship of the Cabiri, and the polytheism of Greece and Rome. While by this ramification of the Trimourti the Asiatic myths became adapted to the imaginations of various races in the lands they reached by the agency of certain sages whom men elevated to be demi-gods—Mithra, Bacchus, Hermes, Hercules, and the rest—Buddha, the great reformer of the three primeval religions, lived in India, and founded his Church there, a sect which

still numbers two hundred millions more believers than Christianity can show, while it certainly influenced the powerful Will both of Jesus and of Confucius.

"Then Christianity raised her standard. Subsequently Mahomet fused Judaism and Christianity, the Bible and the Gospel, in one book, the Koran, adapting them to the apprehension of the Arab race. Finally, Swedenborg borrowed from Magianism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Christian mysticism all the truth and divine beauty that those four great religious books hold in common, and added to them a doctrine, a basis of reasoning that may be termed mathematical.

"Any man who plunges into those religious waters, of which the sources are not all known, will find proofs that Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ, and Swedenborg had identical principles and aimed at identical ends.

"The last of them all, Swedenborg, will perhaps be the Buddha of the North. Obscure and diffuse as his writings are, we find in them the elements of a magnificent conception of society. His Theocracy is sublime, and his creed is the only acceptable one to superior souls. He alone brings man into immediate communion with God, he gives a thirst for God, he has freed the Majesty of God from the trappings in which other human dogmas have disguised Him. He left Him where He is, making His myriad creations and creatures gravitate towards Him through successive transformations which promise a more immediate and more natural future than the Catholic idea of Eternity. Swedenborg has absolved God from the reproach attaching to Him in the estimation of tender souls for the perpetuity of revenge to punish the sin of a moment—a system of injustice and cruelty.

"Each man may know for himself what hope he has of life eternal, and whether this world has any rational sense. I mean to make the attempt. And this attempt may save the world, just as much as the cross at Jerusalem or the sword at Mecca. These were both the offspring of the desert. Of the thirty-three years of Christ's life, we only know the

history of nine; His life of seclusion prepared Him for His life of glory. And I too crave for the desert!"

Notwithstanding the difficulties of the task, I have felt it my duty to depict Lambert's boyhood, the unknown life to which I owe the only happy hours, the only pleasant memories, of my early days. Excepting during those two years I had nothing but annoyances and weariness. Though some happiness was mine at a later time, it was always incomplete.

I have been diffuse, I know; but in default of entering into the whole wide heart and brain of Louis Lambert—two words which inadequately express the infinite aspects of his inner life—it would be almost impossible to make the second part of his intellectual history intelligible—a phase that was unknown to the world and to me, but of which the mystical outcome was made evident to my eyes in the course of a few hours. Those who have not already dropped this volume, will, I hope, understand the events I still have to tell, forming as they do a sort of second existence lived by this creature—may I not say this creation?—in whom everything was to be so extraordinary, even his end.

When Louis returned to Blois, his uncle was eager to procure him some amusement; but the poor priest was regarded as a perfect leper in that godly-minded town. No one would have anything to say to a revolutionary who had taken the oaths. His society, therefore, consisted of a few individuals of what were then called liberal or patriotic, or constitutional opinions, on whom he would call for a rubber of whist or of boston.

At the first house where he was introduced by his uncle, Louis met a young lady, whose circumstances obliged her to remain in this circle, so contemned by those of the fashionable world, though her fortune was such as to make it probable that she might by and by marry into the highest aristocracy of the province. Mlle. Pauline de Villenoix was sole heiress to the wealth amassed by her grandfather, a Jew named Salomon, who, contrary to the customs of his nation, had, in his old age, married a Christian and a Catholic. He

had an only son, who was brought up in his mother's faith. At his father's death young Salomon purchased what was known at that time as a *savonette à vilain* (literally *a cake of soap for a serf*), a small estate called Villenoix, which he contrived to get registered with a baronial title, and took its name. He died unmarried, but he left a natural daughter, to whom he bequeathed the greater part of his fortune, including the lands of Villenoix. He appointed one of his uncles, M. Joseph Salomon, to be the girl's guardian. The old Jew was so devoted to his ward that he seemed willing to make great sacrifices for the sake of marrying her well. But Mlle. de Villenoix's birth, and the cherished prejudice against Jews that prevails in the provinces, would not allow of her being received in the very exclusive circle which, rightly or wrongly, considers itself noble, notwithstanding her own large fortune and her guardian's.

M. Joseph Salomon was resolved that if she could not secure a country squire, his niece should go to Paris and make choice of a husband among the peers of France, liberal or monarchical; as to happiness, that he believed he could secure her by the terms of the marriage contract.

Mlle. de Villenoix was now twenty. Her remarkable beauty and gifts of mind were surer guarantees of happiness than those offered by money. Her features were of the purest type of Jewish beauty; the oval lines, so noble and maidenly, have an indescribable stamp of the ideal, and seem to speak of the joys of the East, its unchangeably blue sky, the glories of its lands, and the fabulous riches of life there. She had fine eyes, shaded by deep eyelids, fringed with thick, curled lashes. Biblical innocence sat on her brow. Her complexion was of the pure whiteness of the Levite's robe. She was habitually silent and thoughtful, but her movements and gestures betrayed a quiet grace, as her speech bore witness to a woman's sweet and loving nature. She had not, indeed, the rosy freshness, the fruit-like bloom which blush on a girl's cheek during her careless years. Darker shadows, with here and there a redder vein, took the place of color, symptomatic of an energetic temper and nervous irritability, such as many men do not like to meet with in a wife, while to others they are an

indication of the most sensitive chastity and passion mingled with pride.

As soon as Louis saw Mlle. de Villenoix, he discerned the angel within. The richest powers of his soul, and his tendency to ecstatic reverie, every faculty within him was at once concentrated in boundless love, the first love of a young man, a passion which is strong indeed in all, but which in him was raised to incalculable power by the perennial ardor of his senses, the character of his ideas, and the manner in which he lived. This passion became a gulf, into which the hapless fellow threw everything; a gulf whither the mind dare not venture, since his, flexible and firm as it was, was lost there. There all was mysterious, for everything went on in that moral world, closed to most men, whose laws were revealed to him—perhaps to his sorrow.

When an accident threw me in the way of his uncle, the good man showed me into the room which Lambert had at that time lived in. I wanted to find some vestiges of his writings, if he should have left any. There among his papers, untouched by the old man from that fine instinct of grief that characterizes the aged, I found a number of letters, too illegible ever to have been sent to Mlle. de Villenoix. My familiarity with Lambert's writing enabled me in time to decipher the hieroglyphics of this shorthand, the result of impatience and a frenzy of passion. Carried away by his feelings, he had written without being conscious of the irregularity of words too slow to express his thoughts. He must have been compelled to copy these chaotic attempts, for the lines often ran into each other; but he was also afraid perhaps of not having sufficiently disguised his feelings, and at first, at any rate, he had probably written his love-letters twice over.

It required all the fervency of my devotion to his memory, and the sort of fanaticism which comes of such a task, to enable me to divine and restore the meaning of the five letters that here follow. These documents, preserved by me with pious care, are the only material evidence of his overmastering passion. Mlle. de Villenoix has no doubt destroyed the real letters that she received, eloquent witnesses to the delirium she inspired.

The first of these papers, evidently a rough sketch, betrays by its style and by its length the many emendations, the heartfelt alarms, the innumerable terrors caused by a desire to please; the changes of expression and the hesitation between the whirl of ideas that beset a man as he indites his first love-letter—a letter he never will forget, each line the result of a reverie, each word the subject of long cogitation, while the most unbridled passion known to man feels the necessity of the most reserved utterance, and like a giant stooping to enter a hovel, speaks humbly and low, so as not to alarm a girl's soul.

No antiquary ever handled his palimpsests with greater respect than I showed in reconstructing these mutilated documents of such joy and suffering as must always be sacred to those who have known similar joy and grief.

I.

"Mademoiselle, when you have read this letter, if you ever should read it, my life will be in your hands, for I love you; and to me, the hope of being loved is life. Others, perhaps, ere now, have, in speaking of themselves, misused the words I must employ to depict the state of my soul; yet, I beseech you to believe in the truth of my expressions; though weak, they are sincere. Perhaps I ought not thus to proclaim my love. Indeed, my heart counseled me to wait in silence till my passion should touch you, that I might the better conceal it if its silent demonstrations should displease you; or till I could express it even more delicately than in words if I found favor in your eyes. However, after having listened for long to the coy fears that fill a youthful heart with alarms, I write in obedience to the instinct which drags useless lamentations from the dying.

"It has needed all my courage to silence the pride of poverty, and to overleap the barriers which prejudice erects between you and me. I have had to smother many reflections to love you in spite of your wealth; and as I write to you, am I not in danger of the scorn which women often reserve for professions of love, which they accept only as one more tribute

of flattery? But we cannot help rushing with all our might towards happiness, or being attracted to the life of love as a plant is to the light; we must have been very unhappy before we can conquer the torment, the anguish, of those secret deliberations when reason proves to us by a thousand arguments how barren our yearning must be if it remains buried in our hearts, and when hopes bid us dare everything.

"I was happy when I admired you in silence; I was so lost in the contemplation of your beautiful soul, that only to see you left me hardly anything further to imagine. And I should not now have dared to address you if I had not heard that you were leaving. What misery has that one word brought upon me! Indeed, it is my despair that has shown me the extent of my attachment—it is unbounded. Mademoiselle, you will never know—at least, I hope you may never know—the anguish of dreading lest you should lose the only happiness that has dawned on you on earth, the only thing that has thrown a gleam of light in the darkness of misery. I understood yesterday that my life was no more in myself, but in you. There is but one woman in the world for me, as there is but one thought in my soul. I dare not tell you to what state I am reduced by my love for you. I would have you only as a gift from yourself; I must therefore avoid showing myself to you in all the attractiveness of dejection—for is it not often more impressive to a noble soul than that of good fortune? There are many things I may not tell you. Indeed, I have too lofty a notion of love to taint it with ideas that are alien to its nature. If my soul is worthy of yours, and my life pure, your heart will have a sympathetic insight, and you will understand me!

"It is the fate of man to offer himself to the woman who can make him believe in happiness; but it is your prerogative to reject the truest passion if it is not in harmony with the vague voices in your heart—that I know. If my lot, as decided by you, must be adverse to my hopes, Mademoiselle, let me appeal to the delicacy of your maiden soul and the ingenuous compassion of a woman to burn my letter. On my knees I beseech you to forget all! Do not mock at a feeling that is wholly respectful, and that is too deeply graven

on my heart ever to be effaced. Break my heart, but do not rend it! Let the expression of my first love, a pure and youthful love, be lost in your pure and youthful heart! Let it die there as a prayer rises up to die in the bosom of God!

"I owe you much gratitude: I have spent delicious hours occupied in watching you, and giving myself up to the faint dreams of my life; do not crush these long but transient joys by some girlish irony. Be satisfied not to answer me. I shall know how to interpret your silence; you will see me no more. If I must be condemned to know forever what happiness means, and to be forever bereft of it; if, like a banished angel, I am to cherish the sense of celestial joys while bound for ever to a world of sorrow—well, I can keep the secret of my love as well as that of my griefs.—And farewell!

"Yes, I resign you to God, to whom I will pray for you, beseeching Him to grant you a happy life; for even if I am driven from your heart, into which I have crept by stealth, still I shall ever be near you. Otherwise, of what value would the sacred words be of this letter, my first and perhaps my last entreaty? If I should ever cease to think of you, to love you, whether in happiness or in woe, should I not deserve my punishment?"

II.

"You are not going away! And I am loved! I, a poor, insignificant creature! My beloved Pauline, you do not yourself know the power of the look I believe in, the look you gave me to tell me that you had chosen me—you so young and lovely, with the world at your feet!

"To enable you to understand my happiness, I should have to give you a history of my life. If you had rejected me, all was over for me. I have suffered too much. Yes, my love for you, my comforting and stupendous love, was a last effort of yearning for the happiness my soul strove to reach—a soul crushed by fruitless labor, consumed by fears that make me doubt myself, eaten into by despair which has often urged me to die. No one in the world can conceive of the terrors

my fateful imagination inflicts on me. It often bears me up to the sky and suddenly flings me to earth again from prodigious heights. Deep-seated rushes of power, or some rare and subtle instance of peculiar lucidity, assure me now and then that I am capable of great things. Then I embrace the universe in my mind, I knead, shape it, inform it, I comprehend it—or fancy that I do; then suddenly I awake—alone, sunk in blackest night, helpless and weak; I forget the light I saw but now, I find no succor; above all, there is no heart where I may take refuge.

"This distress of my inner life affects my physical existence. The nature of my character gives me over to the raptures of happiness as defenseless as when the fearful light of reflection comes to analyze and demolish them. Gifted as I am with the melancholy faculty of seeing obstacles and success with equal clearness, according to the mood of the moment, I am happy or miserable by turns.

"Thus, when first I met you, I felt the presence of an angelic nature, I breathed an air that was sweet to my burning breast, I heard in my soul the voice that never can be false, telling me that here was happiness; but perceiving all the barriers that divided us, I understood for the first time what worldly prejudices were; I understood the vastness of their pettiness, and these difficulties terrified me more than the prospect of happiness could delight me. At once I felt the awful reaction which casts my expansive soul back on itself; the smile you had brought to my lips suddenly turned to a bitter grimace, and I could only strive to keep calm, while my soul was boiling with the turmoil of contradictory emotions. In short, I experienced that gnawing pang to which twenty-three years of suppressed sighs and betrayed affections have not inured me.

"Well, Pauline, the look by which you promised that I should be happy suddenly warmed my vitality, and turned all my sorrows into joy. Now, I could wish that I had suffered more. My love is suddenly full-grown. My soul was a wide territory that lacked the blessing of sunshine, and your eyes have shed light on it. Beloved providence! you will be all in all to me, orphan as I am, without a relation but my uncle.

You will be my whole family, as you are my whole wealth, nay, the whole world to me. Have you not bestowed on me every gladness man can desire in that chaste—lavish—timid glance?

"You have given me incredible self-confidence and audacity. I can dare all things now. I came back to Blois in deep dejection. Five years of study in the heart of Paris had made me look on the world as a prison. I had conceived of vast schemes, and dared not speak of them. Fame seemed to me a prize for charlatans, to which a really noble spirit should not stoop. Thus, my ideas could only make their way by the assistance of a man bold enough to mount the platform of the press, and to harangue loudly the simpletons he scorns. This kind of courage I have not. I plowed my way on, crushed by the verdict of the crowd, in despair at never making it hear me. I was at once too humble and too lofty! I swallowed my thoughts as other men swallow humiliations. I had even come to despise knowledge, blaming it for yielding no real happiness.

"But since yesterday I am wholly changed. For your sake I now covet every palm of glory, every triumph of success. When I lay my head on your knees, I could wish to attract to you the eyes of the whole world, just as I long to concentrate in my love every idea, every power that is in me. The most splendid celebrity is a possession that genius alone can create. Well, I can, at my will, make for you a bed of laurels. And if the silent ovation paid to science is not all you desire, I have within me the sword of the Word; I could run in the path of honor and ambition where others only crawl.

"Command me, Pauline; I will be whatever you will. My iron will can do anything—I am loved! Armed with that thought, ought not a man to sweep everything before him? The man who wants all can do all. If you are the prize of success, I enter the lists to-morrow. To win such a look as that you bestowed on me, I would leap the deepest abyss. Through you I understand the fabulous achievements of chivalry and the most fantastic tales of the *Arabian Nights*. I can believe now in the most fantastic excesses of love, and in the success of a prisoner's wildest attempt to recover his liberty. You have aroused the thousand virtues that lay

dormant within me—patience, resignation, all the powers of my heart, all the strength of my soul. I live by you and—heavenly thought!—for you. Everything now has a meaning for me in life. I understand everything, even the vanities of wealth.

"I find myself shedding all the pearls of the Indies at your feet; I fancy you reclining either on the rarest flowers, or on the softest tissues, and all the splendor of the world seems hardly worthy of you, for whom I would I could command the harmony and the light that are given out by the harps of seraphs and the stars of heaven! Alas! a poor, studious poet, I offer you in words treasures I cannot bestow; I can only give you my heart, in which you reign forever. I have nothing else. But are there no treasures in eternal gratitude, in a smile whose expression will perpetually vary with perennial happiness, under the constant eagerness of my devotion to guess the wishes of your loving soul? Has not one celestial glance given us assurance of always understanding each other?

"I have a prayer now to be said to God every night—a prayer full of you: 'Let my Pauline be happy!' And will you fill all my days as you now fill my heart?

"Farewell, I can but trust you to God alone!"

III.

"Pauline! tell me if I can in any way have displeased you yesterday? Throw off the pride of heart which inflicts on me the secret tortures that can be caused by one we love. Scold me if you will! Since yesterday, a vague, unutterable dread of having offended you pours grief on the life of feeling which you had made so sweet and so rich. The lightest veil that comes between two souls sometimes grows to be a brazen wall. There are no venial crimes in love! If you have the very spirit of that noble sentiment, you must feel all its pangs, and we must be unceasingly careful not to fret each other by some heedless word.

"No doubt, my beloved treasure, if there is any fault, it is in me. I cannot pride myself in the belief that I under-

stand a woman's heart in all the expansion of its tenderness, all the grace of its devotedness; but I will always endeavor to appreciate the value of what you vouchsafe to show me of the secrets of yours.

"Speak to me! Answer me soon! The melancholy into which we are thrown by the idea of a wrong done is frightful; it casts a shroud over life, and doubts on everything.

"I spent this morning sitting on the bank by the sunken road, gazing at the turrets of Villenoix, not daring to go to our hedge. If you could imagine all I saw in my soul! What gloomy visions passed before me under the gray sky, whose cold sheen added to my dreary mood! I had dark presentiments! I was terrified lest I should fail to make you happy.

"I must tell you everything, my dear Pauline. There are moments when the spirit of vitality seems to abandon me. I feel bereft of all strength. Everything is a burden to me; every fiber of my body is inert, every sense is flaccid, my sight grows dim, my tongue is paralyzed, my imagination is extinct, desire is dead—nothing survives but my mere human vitality. At such times, though you were in all the splendor of your beauty, though you should lavish on me your subtlest smiles and tenderest words, an evil influence would blind me, and distort the most ravishing melody into discordant sounds. At those times—as I believe—some argumentative demon stands before me, showing me the void beneath the most real possessions. This pitiless demon mows down every flower, and mocks at the sweetest feelings, saying: 'Well—and then?' He mars the fairest work by showing me its skeleton, and reveals the mechanism of things while hiding the beautiful results.

"At those terrible moments, when the evil spirit takes possession of me, when the divine light is darkened in my soul without my knowing the cause, I sit in grief and anguish, I wish myself deaf and dumb, I long for death to give me rest. These hours of doubt and uneasiness are perhaps inevitable; at any rate, they teach me not to be proud after the flights which have borne me to the skies where I have gathered a full harvest of thoughts; for it is always after

some long excursion in the vast fields of the intellect, and after the most luminous speculations, that I tumble, broken and weary, into this limbo. At such a moment, my angel, a wife would doubt my love for her—at any rate, she might. If she were capricious, ailing, or depressed, she would need the comforting overflow of ingenious affection, and I should not have a glance to bestow on her. It is my shame, Pauline, to have to tell you that at such times I could weep with you, but that nothing could make me smile.

"A woman can always conceal her troubles; for her child, or for the man she loves, she can laugh in the midst of suffering. And could not I, for you, Pauline, imitate the exquisite reserve of a woman? Since yesterday I have doubted my own power. If I could displease you once, if I failed once to understand you, I dread lest I should often be carried out of our happy circle by my evil demon. Supposing I were to have many of those dreadful moods, or that my unbounded love could not make up for the dark hours of my life—that I were doomed to remain such as I am? —Fatal doubts!

"Power is indeed a fatal possession if what I feel within me is power. Pauline, go! Leave me, desert me! Sooner would I endure every ill in life than endure the misery of knowing that you were unhappy through me.

"But, perhaps, the demon has had such empire over me only because I have had no gentle, white hands about me to drive him off. No woman has ever shed on me the balm of her affection; and I know not whether, if love should wave his pinions over my head in these moments of exhaustion, new strength might not be given to my spirit. This terrible melancholy is perhaps a result of my isolation, one of the torments of a lonely soul which pays for its hidden treasures with groans and unknown suffering. Those who enjoy little shall suffer little; immense happiness entails unutterable anguish!

"How terrible a doom! If it be so, must we not shudder for ourselves, we who are superhumanly happy? If nature sells us everything at its true value, into what pit are we not fated to fall? Ah! the most fortunate lovers are those

who die together in the midst of their youth and love! How sad it all is! Does my soul foresee evil in the future? I examine myself, wondering whether there is anything in me that can cause you a moment's anxiety. I love you too selfishly perhaps? I shall be laying on your beloved head a burden heavy out of all proportion to the joy my love can bring to your heart. If there dwells in me some inexorable power which I must obey—if I am compelled to curse when you pray, if some dark thought coerces me when I would fain kneel at your feet and play as a child, will you not be jealous of that wayward and tricky spirit?

"You understand, dearest heart, that what I dread is not being wholly yours; that I would gladly forego all the scepters and the palms of the world to enshrine you in one eternal thought, to see a perfect life and an exquisite poem in our rapturous love; to throw my soul into it, drown my powers, and wring from each hour the joys it has to give!

"Ah, my memories of love are crowding back upon me, the clouds of despair will lift. Farewell. I leave you now to be more entirely yours. My beloved soul, I look for a line, a word that may restore my peace of mind. Let me know whether I really grieved my Pauline, or whether some uncertain expression of her countenance misled me. I could not bear to have to reproach myself after a whole life of happiness, for ever having met you without a smile of love, a honeyed word. To grieve the woman I love—Pauline, I should count it a crime. Tell me the truth, do not put me off with some magnanimous subterfuge, but forgive me without cruelty."

FRAGMENT.

"Is so perfect an attachment happiness? Yes, for years of suffering would not pay for an hour of love.

"Yesterday, your sadness, as I suppose, passed into my soul as swiftly as a shadow falls. Were you sad or suffering? I was wretched. Whence came my distress? Write to me at once. Why did I not know it? We are not yet completely one in mind. At two leagues' distance or at a thousand I

ought to feel your pains and sorrows. I shall not believe that I love you till my life is so bound up with yours that our life is one, till our hearts, our thoughts are one. I must be where you are, see what you see, feel what you feel, be with you in thought. Did not I know, at once, that your carriage had been overthrown and you were bruised? But on that day I had been with you, I had never left you, I could see you. When my uncle asked me what made me turn so pale, I answered at once, 'Mlle. de Villenoix has had a fall.'

"Why, then, yesterday, did I fail to read your soul? Did you wish to hide the cause of your grief? However, I fancied I could feel that you were arguing in my favor, though in vain, with that dreadful Salomon, who freezes my blood. That man is not of our heaven.

"Why do you insist that our happiness, which has no resemblance to that of other people, should conform to the laws of the world? And yet I delight too much in your bashfulness, your religion, your superstitions, not to obey your lightest whim. What you do must be right; nothing can be purer than your mind, as nothing is lovelier than your face, which reflects your divine soul.

"I shall wait for a letter before going along the lanes to meet the sweet hour you grant me. Oh! if you could know how the sight of those turrets makes my heart throb when I see them edged with light by the moon, our only confidante."

IV.

"Farewell to glory, farewell to the future, to the life I had dreamed of! Now, my well-beloved, my glory is that I am yours, and worthy of you; my future lies entirely in the hope of seeing you; and is not my life summed up in sitting at your feet, in lying under your eyes, in drawing deep breaths in the heaven you have created for me? All my powers, all my thoughts must be yours, since you could speak those thrilling words, 'Your sufferings must be mine!' Should I not be stealing some joys from love, some moments from happiness, some experiences from your divine spirit, if I gave my hours to study—ideas to the world and poems to

the poets? Nay, nay, my very life, I will treasure everything for you; I will bring to you every flower of my soul. Is there anything fine enough, splendid enough, in all the resources of the world or of intellect, to do honor to a heart so rich, so pure as yours—the heart to which I dare now and again unite my own? Yes, now and again, I dare believe that I can love as much as you do.

"And yet, no; you are the angel-woman; there will always be a greater charm in the expression of your feelings, more harmony in your voice, more grace in your smile, more purity in your looks than in mine. Let me feel that you are the creature of a higher sphere than that I live in; it will be your pride to have descended from it; mine, that I should have deserved you; and you will not perhaps have fallen too far by coming down to me in my poverty and misery. Nay, if a woman's most glorious refuge is in a heart that is wholly her own, you will always reign supreme in mine. Not a thought, not a deed, shall ever pollute this heart, this glorious sanctuary, so long as you vouchsafe to dwell in it—and will you not dwell in it forever? Did you not enchant me by the words, 'Now and forever?' *Nunc et semper!* And I have written these words of our ritual below your portrait—words worthy of you, as they are of God. He is *nunc et semper*, as my love is.

"Never, no, never, can I exhaust that which is immense, infinite, unbounded—and such is the feeling I have for you; I have imagined its immeasurable extent, as we measure space by the dimensions of one of its parts. I have had ineffable joys, whole hours filled with delicious meditation, as I have recalled a single gesture or the tone of a word of yours. Thus there will be memories of which the magnitude will overpower me, if the reminiscence of a sweet and friendly interview is enough to make me shed tears of joy, to move and thrill my soul, and to be an inexhaustible wellspring of gladness. Love is the life of angels!

"I can never, I believe, exhaust my joy in seeing you. This rapture, the least fervid of any, though it never can last long enough, has made me apprehend the eternal contemplation in which seraphs and spirits abide in the presence

of God; nothing can be more natural, if from His essence there emanates a light as fruitful of new emotions as that of your eyes is, of your imposing brow, and your beautiful countenance—the image of your soul. Then, the soul, our second self, whose pure form can never perish, makes our love immortal. I would there were some other language than that I use to express to you the ever-new ecstasy of my love; but since there is one of our own creating, since our looks are living speech, must we not meet face to face to read in each other's eyes those questions and answers from the heart, that are so living, so penetrating, that one evening you could say to me, 'Be silent!' when I was not speaking. Do you remember it, dear life?

"When I am away from you in the darkness of absence, am I not reduced to use human words, too feeble to express heavenly feelings? But words at any rate represent the marks those feelings leave in my soul, just as the word *God* imperfectly sums up the notions we form of that mysterious First Cause. But, in spite of the subtleties and infinite variety of language, I have no words that can express to you the exquisite union by which my life is merged into yours whenever I think of you.

"And with what word can I conclude when I cease writing to you, and yet do not part from you? What can *farewell* mean, unless in death? But is death a farewell? Would not my spirit be then more closely one with yours? Ah! my first and last thought; formerly I offered you my heart and life on my knees; now what fresh blossoms of feeling can I discover in my soul that I have not already given you? It would be a gift of a part of what is wholly yours.

"Are you my future? How deeply I regret the past! I would I could have back all the years that are ours no more, and give them to you to reign over, as you do over my present life. What indeed was that time when I knew you not? It would be a void but that I was so wretched."

FRAGMENT.

"Beloved angel, how delightful last evening was! How full of riches your dear heart is! And is your love endless,

like mine? Each word brought me fresh joy, and each look made it deeper. The placid expression of your countenance gave our thoughts a limitless horizon. It was all as infinite as the sky, and as bland as its blue. The refinement of your adored features repeated itself by some inexplicable magic in your pretty movements and your least gestures. I knew that you were all graciousness, all love, but I did not know how variously graceful you could be. Everything combined to urge me to tender solicitations, to make me ask the first kiss that a woman always refuses, no doubt that it may be snatched from her. You, dear soul of my life, will never guess beforehand what you may grant to my love, and will yield perhaps without knowing it! You are utterly true, and obey your heart alone.

"The sweet tones of your voice blended with the tender harmonies that filled the quiet air, the cloudless sky. Not a bird piped, not a breeze whispered—solitude, you, and I. The motionless leaves did not quiver in the beautiful sunset hues which are both light and shadow. You felt that heavenly poetry—you who experienced so many various emotions, and who so often raised your eyes to heaven to avoid answering me. You who are proud and saucy, humble and masterful, who give yourself to me so completely in spirit and in thought, and evade the most bashful caress. Dear witcheries of the heart! They ring in my ears; they sound and play there still. Sweet words but half spoken, like a child's speech, neither promise nor confession, but allowing love to cherish its fairest hopes without fear or torment! How pure a memory for life! What a free blossoming of all the flowers that spring from the soul, which a mere trifle can blight, but which, at that moment, everything warmed and expanded.

"And it will be always so, will it not, my beloved? As I recall, this morning, the fresh and living delights revealed to me in that hour, I am conscious of a joy which makes me conceive of true love as an ocean of everlasting and ever-new experiences, into which we may plunge with increasing delight. Every day, every word, every kiss, every glance, must increase it by its tribute of past happiness. Hearts that are large enough never to forget must live every moment in their

past joys as much as in those promised by the future. This was my dream of old, and now it is no longer a dream! Have I not met on this earth with an angel who has made me know all its happiness, as a reward, perhaps, for having endured all its torments? Angel of heaven, I salute thee with a kiss.

"I shall send you this hymn of thanksgiving from my heart, I owe it to you; but it can hardly express my gratitude or the morning worship my heart offers up day by day to her who epitomized the whole gospel of the heart in this divine word: 'Believe.'"

V.

"What! no further difficulties, dearest heart! We shall be free to belong to each other every day, every hour, every minute, and forever! We may be as happy for all the days of our life as we now are by stealth, at rare intervals! Our pure, deep feelings will assume the expression of the thousand fond acts I have dreamed of. For me your little foot will be bared, you will be wholly mine! Such happiness kills me; it is too much for me. My head is too weak, it will burst with the vehemence of my ideas. I cry and I laugh—I am possessed! Every joy is as an arrow of flame; it pierces and burns me. In fancy you rise before my eyes, ravished and dazzled by numberless and capricious images of delight.

"In short, our whole future life is before me—its torrents, its still places, its joys; it seethes, it flows on, it lies sleeping; then again it awakes fresh and young. I see myself and you side by side, walking with equal pace, living in the same thought; each dwelling in the other's heart, understanding each other, responding to each other as an echo catches and repeats a sound across wide distances.

"Can life be long when it is thus consumed hour by hour? Shall we not die in a first embrace? What if our souls have already met in that sweet evening kiss which almost overpowered us—a feeling kiss, but the crown of my hopes, the ineffectual expression of all the prayers I breathe while we are apart, hidden in my soul like remorse?

"I, who would creep back and hide in the hedge only to

hear your footsteps as you went homewards—I may henceforth admire you at my leisure, see you busy, moving, smiling, prattling! An endless joy! You cannot imagine all the gladness it is to me to see you going and coming; only a man can know that deep delight. Your least movement gives me greater pleasure than a mother even can feel as she sees her child asleep or at play. I love you with every kind of love in one. The grace of your least gesture is always new to me. I fancy I could spend whole nights breathing your breath; I would I could steal into every detail of your life, be the very substance of your thoughts—be your very self.

"Well, we shall, at any rate, never part again! No human alloy shall ever disturb our love, infinite in its phases and as pure as all things are which are One—our love, vast as the sea, vast as the sky! You are mine! all mine! I may look into the depths of your eyes to read the sweet soul that alternately hides and shines there, to anticipate your wishes.

"My best-beloved, listen to some things I have never yet dared to tell you, but which I may confess to you now. I felt a certain bashfulness of soul which hindered the full expression of my feelings, so I strove to shroud them under the garb of thoughts. But now I long to lay my heart bare before you, to tell you of the ardor of my dreams, to reveal the boiling demands of my senses, excited, no doubt, by the solitude in which I have lived, perpetually fired by conceptions of happiness, and aroused by you, so fair in form, so attractive in manner. How can I express to you my thirst for the unknown rapture of possessing an adored wife, a rapture to which the union of two souls by love must give frenzied intensity. Yes, my Pauline, I have sat for hours in a sort of stupor caused by the violence of my passionate yearning, lost in the dream of a caress as though in a bottomless abyss. At such moments my whole vitality, my thoughts and powers, are merged and united in what I must call desire, for lack of a word to express that nameless delirium.

"And I may confess to you now that one day, when I would not take your hand when you offered it so sweetly—an act of melancholy prudence that made you doubt my love—I was in one of those fits of madness when a man could

commit a murder to possess a woman. Yes, if I had felt the exquisite pressure you offered me as vividly as I heard your voice in my heart, I know not to what lengths my passion might not have carried me. But I can be silent, and suffer a great deal. Why speak of this anguish when my visions are to become realities? It will be in my power now to make life one long love-making!

"Dearest love, there is a certain effect of light on your black hair which could rivet me for hours, my eyes full of tears, as I gazed at your sweet person, were it not that you turn away and say, 'For shame; you make me quite shy!'

"To-morrow, then, our love is to be made known! Oh, Pauline! the eyes of others, the curiosity of strangers weigh on my soul. Let us go to Villenoix, and stay there far from everyone. I should like no creature in human form to intrude into the sanctuary where you are to be mine; I could even wish that, when we are dead, it should cease to exist—should be destroyed. Yes; I would fain hide from all nature a happiness which we alone can understand, alone can feel, which is so stupendous that I throw myself into it only to die—it is a gulf!

"Do not be alarmed by the tears that have wetted this page; they are tears of joy. My only blessing, we need never part again!"

In 1823 I traveled from Paris to Touraine by diligence. At Mer we took up a passenger for Blois. As the guard put him into that part of the coach where I had my seat, he said jestingly—

"You will not be crowded, M. Lefebvre!"—I was, in fact, alone.

On hearing this name, and seeing a white-haired old man, who looked eighty at least, I naturally thought of Lambert's uncle. After a few ingenious questions, I discovered that I was not mistaken. The good man had been looking after his vintage at Mer, and was returning to Blois. I then asked for some news of my old "chum." At the first word, the old priest's face, as grave and stern already as that of a soldier

who has gone through many hardships, became more sad and dark; the lines on his forehead were slightly knit, he set his lips, and said, with a suspicious glance—

"Then you have never seen him since you left the college?"

"Indeed, I have not," said I. "But we are equally to blame for our forgetfulness. Young men, as you know, lead such an adventurous and storm-tossed life when they leave their school-forms, that it is only by meeting that they can be sure of an enduring affection. However, a reminiscence of youth sometimes comes as a reminder, and it is impossible to forget entirely, especially when two lads have been such friends as we were. We went by the name of the Poet-and-Pythagoras."

I told him my name; when he heard it, the worthy man grew gloomier than ever.

"Then you have not heard his story?" said he. "My poor nephew was to be married to the richest heiress in Blois; but the day before his wedding he went mad."

"Lambert! Mad!" cried I in dismay. "But from what cause? He had the finest memory, the most strongly constituted brain, the soundest judgment, I ever met with. Really a great genius—with too great a passion for mysticism perhaps; but the kindest heart in the world. Something most extraordinary must have happened?"

"I see you knew him well," said the priest.

From Mer, till we reached Blois, we talked only of my poor friend, with long digressions, by which I learned the facts I have already related in the order of their interest. I confessed to his uncle the character of our studies and of his nephew's predominant ideas; then the old man told me of the events that had come into Lambert's life since our parting. From M. Lefebvre's account, Lambert had betrayed some symptoms of madness before his marriage; but they were such as are common to men who love passionately, and seemed to me less startling when I knew how vehement his love had been and when I saw Mlle. de Villenoix. In the country, where ideas are scarce, a man overflowing with original thought and devoted to a system, as Louis was, might well be regarded as eccentric, to say the least. His language would,

no doubt, seem the stranger because he so rarely spoke. He would say, "That man does not dwell in my heaven," where anyone else would have said, "We are not made on the same pattern." Every clever man has his own quirks of speech. The broader his genius, the more conspicuous are the singularities which constitute the various degrees of eccentricity. In the country an eccentric man is at once set down as half mad.

Hence M. Lefebvre's first sentences left me doubtful of my schoolmate's insanity. I listened to the old man, but I criticised his statements.

The most serious symptom had supervened a day or two before the marriage. Louis had had some well-marked attacks of catalepsy. He had once remained motionless for fifty-nine hours, his eyes staring, neither speaking nor eating; a purely nervous affection, to which persons under the influence of violent passion are liable; a rare malady, but perfectly well known to the medical faculty. What was really extraordinary was that Louis should not have had several previous attacks, since his habits of rapt thought and the character of his mind would predispose him to them. But his temperament, physical and mental, was so admirably balanced, that it had no doubt been able to resist the demands on his strength. The excitement to which he had been wound up by the anticipation of acute physical enjoyment, enhanced by a chaste life and a highly strung soul, had no doubt led to these attacks, of which the results are as little known as the cause.

The letters that have by chance escaped destruction show very plainly a transition from pure idealism to the most intense sensualism.

Time was when Lambert and I had admired this phenomenon of the human mind, in which he saw the fortuitous separation of our two natures, and the signs of a total removal of the inner man, using its unknown faculties under the operation of an unknown cause. This disorder, a mystery as deep as that of sleep, was connected with the scheme of evidence which Lambert had set forth in his *Treatise on the Will*. And when M. Lefebvre spoke to me of Louis's first

attack, I suddenly remembered a conversation we had had on the subject after reading a medical book.

"Deep meditation and rapt ecstasy are perhaps the undeveloped germs of catalepsy," he had said in conclusion.

On the occasion when he so concisely formulated this idea, he had been trying to link mental phenomena together by a series of results, following the processes of the intellect step by step, from their beginnings as those simple, purely animal impulses of instinct, which are all-sufficient to many human beings, particularly to those men whose energies are wholly spent in mere mechanical labor; then, going on to the aggregation of ideas and rising to comparison, reflection, meditation, and finally ecstasy and catalepsy. Lambert, of course, in the artlessness of youth, imagined that he had laid down the lines of a great work when he thus built up a scale of the various degrees of man's mental powers.

I remember that, by one of those chances which seem like predestination, we got hold of a great Martyrology, in which the most curious narratives are given of the total abeyance of physical life which a man can attain to under the paroxysms of the inner life. By reflecting on the effects of fanaticism, Lambert was led to believe that the collected ideas to which we give the name of feelings may very possibly be the material outcome of some fluid which is generated in all men, more or less abundantly, according to the way in which their organs absorb, from the medium in which they live, the elementary atoms that produce it. We went crazy over catalepsy; and with the eagerness that boys throw into every pursuit, we endeavored to endure pain by thinking of something else. We exhausted ourselves by making experiments not unlike those of the epileptic fanatics of the last century, a religious mania which will some day be of service to the science of humanity. I would stand on Lambert's chest, remaining there several minutes without giving him the slightest pain; but notwithstanding these crazy attempts, we did not achieve an attack of catalepsy.

This digression seemed necessary to account for my first doubts, which were, however, completely dispelled by M. Lefebvre.

" When this attack had passed off," said he, " my nephew sank into a state of extreme terror, a dejection that nothing could overcome. He thought himself unfit for marriage. I watched him with the care of a mother for her child, and found him preparing to perform on himself the operation to which Origen believed he owed his talents. I at once carried him off to Paris, and placed him under the care of M. Esquirol. All through our journey Louis sat sunk in almost unbroken torpor, and did not recognize me. The Paris physicians pronounced him incurable, and unanimously advised his being left in perfect solitude, with nothing to break the silence that was needful for his very improbable recovery, and that he should live always in a cool room with a subdued light. Mlle. de Villenoix, whom I had been careful not to apprise of Louis's state," he went on, blinking his eyes, " but who was supposed to have broken off the match, went to Paris and heard what the doctors had pronounced. She immediately begged to see my nephew, who hardly recognized her; then, like the noble soul she is, she insisted on devoting herself to giving him such care as might tend to his recovery. She would have been obliged to do so if he had been her husband, she said, and could she do less for him as her lover?

" She removed Louis to Villenoix, where they have been living for two years."

So, instead of continuing my journey, I stopped at Blois to go to see Louis. Good M. Lefebvre would not hear of my lodging anywhere but at his house, where he showed me his nephew's room with the books and all else that had belonged to him. At every turn the old man could not suppress some mournful exclamation, showing what hopes Louis's precocious genius had raised, and the terrible grief into which this irreparable ruin had plunged him.

" That young fellow knew everything, my dear sir!" said he, laying on the table a volume containing Spinoza's works. " How could so well organized a brain go astray? "

" Indeed, monsieur," said I, " was it not perhaps the result of its being so highly organized? If he really is a victim to the malady as yet unstudied in all its aspects, which is known

simply as madness, I am inclined to attribute it to his passion. His studies and his mode of life had strung his powers and faculties to a degree of energy beyond which the least further strain was too much for nature; Love was enough to crack them, or to raise them to a new form of expression which we are maligning perhaps, by ticketing it without due knowledge. In fact, he may perhaps have regarded the joys of marriage as an obstacle to the perfection of his inner man and his flight towards spiritual spheres."

"My dear sir," said the old man, after listening to me with attention, "your reasoning is, no doubt, very sound; but even if I could follow it, would this melancholy logic comfort me for the loss of my nephew?"

Lambert's uncle was one of those men who live only by their affections.

I went to Villenoix on the following day. The kind old man accompanied me to the gates of Blois. When we were out on the road to Villenoix, he stopped me and said—

"As you may suppose, I do not go there. But do not forget what I have said; and in Mlle. de Villenoix's presence affect not to perceive that Louis is mad."

He remained standing on the spot where I left him, watching me till I was out of sight.

I made my way to the château of Villenoix, not without deep agitation. My thoughts were many at each step on this road, which Louis had so often trodden with a heart full of hopes, a soul spurred on by the myriad darts of love. The shrubs, the trees, the turns of the winding road where little gullies broke the banks on each side, were to me full of strange interest. I tried to enter into the impressions and thoughts of my unhappy friend. Those evening meetings on the edge of the coombe, where his lady-love had been wont to find him, had, no doubt, initiated Mlle. de Villenoix into the secrets of that vast and lofty spirit, as I had learned them all some years before.

But the thing that most occupied my mind, and gave to my pilgrimage the interest of intense curiosity, in addition to the almost pious feelings that led me onwards, was that

glorious faith of Mlle. de Villenoix's which the good priest had told me of. Had she in the course of time been infected with her lover's madness, or had she so completely entered into his soul that she could understand all its thoughts, even the most perplexed? I lost myself in the wonderful problem of feeling, passing the highest inspirations of passion and the most beautiful instances of self-sacrifice. That one should die for the other is an almost vulgar form of devotion. To live faithful to one love is a form of heroism that immortalized Mlle. Dupuis. When the great Napoleon and Lord Byron could find successors in the hearts of women they had loved, we may well admire Bolingbroke's widow; but Mlle. Dupuis could feed on the memories of many years of happiness, whereas Mlle. de Villenoix, having known nothing of love but its first excitement, seemed to me to typify love in its highest expression. If she were herself almost crazy, it was splendid; but if she had understood and entered into his madness, she combined with the beauty of a noble heart a crowning effort of passion worthy to be studied and honored.

When I saw the tall turrets of the château, remembering how often poor Lambert must have thrilled at the sight of them, my heart beat anxiously. As I recalled the events of our boyhood, I was almost a sharer in his present life and situation. At last I reached a wide, deserted courtyard, and I went into the hall of the house without meeting a soul. There the sound of my steps brought out an old woman, to whom I gave a letter written to Mlle. de Villenoix by M. Lefebvre. In a few minutes this woman returned to bid me enter, and led me to a low room, floored with black-and-white marble; the Venetian shutters were closed, and at the end of the room I dimly saw Louis Lambert.

"Be seated, monsieur," said a gentle voice that went to my heart.

Mlle. de Villenoix was at my side before I was aware of her presence, and noiselessly brought me a chair, which at first I would not accept. It was so dark that at first I saw Mlle. de Villenoix and Lambert only as two black masses perceived against the gloomy background. I presently sat down

under the influence of the feeling that comes over us, almost in spite of ourselves, under the obscure vault of a church. My eyes, full of the bright sunshine, accustomed themselves gradually to this artificial night.

"Monsieur is your old school-friend," she said to Louis.

He made no reply. At last I could see him, and it was one of those spectacles that are stamped on the memory forever. He was standing, his elbows resting on the cornice of the low wainscot, which threw his body forward, so that it seemed bowed under the weight of his bent head. His hair was as long as a woman's, falling over his shoulders and hanging about his face, giving him a resemblance to the busts of the great men of the time of Louis XIV. His face was perfectly white. He constantly rubbed one leg against the other, with a mechanical action that nothing could have checked, and the incessant friction of the bones made a doleful sound. Near him was a bed of moss on boards.

"He very rarely lies down," said Mlle. de Villenoix; "but whenever he does, he sleeps for several days."

Louis stood, as I beheld him, day and night with a fixed gaze, never winking his eyelids as we do. Having asked Mlle. de Villenoix whether a little more light would hurt our friend, on her reply I opened the shutters a little way, and could see the expression of Lambert's countenance. Alas! he was wrinkled, white-headed, his eyes dull and lifeless as those of the blind. His features seemed all drawn upwards to the top of his head. I made several attempts to talk to him, but he did not hear me. He was a wreck snatched from the grave, a conquest of life from death—or of death from life!

I stayed for about an hour, sunk in unaccountable dreams, and lost in painful thought. I listened to Mlle. de Villenoix, who told me every detail of this life—that of a child in arms.

Suddenly Louis ceased rubbing his legs together, and said slowly—

"The angels are white."

I cannot express the effect produced upon me by this utterance, by the sound of the voice I had loved, whose accents, so painfully expected, had seemed to be lost forever. My eyes filled with tears in spite of every effort. An involuntary

instinct warned me, making me doubt whether Louis had really lost his reason. I was indeed well assured that he neither saw nor heard me; but the sweetness of his tone, which seemed to reveal heavenly happiness, gave his speech an amazing effect. These words, the incomplete revelation of an unknown world, rang in our souls like some glorious distant bells in the depth of a dark night. I was no longer surprised that Mlle. de Villenoix considered Lambert to be perfectly sane. The life of the soul had perhaps subdued that of the body. His faithful companion had no doubt—as I had at that moment—intuitions of that melodious and beautiful existence to which we give the name of Heaven in its highest meaning.

This woman, this angel, always was with him, seated at her embroidery frame; and each time she drew the needle out she gazed at Lambert with sad and tender feeling. Unable to endure this terrible sight—for I could not, like Mlle. de Villenoix, read all his secrets—I went out, and she came with me to walk for a few minutes and talk of herself and of Lambert.

"Louis must, no doubt, appear to be mad," said she. "But he is not, if the term mad ought only to be used in speaking of those whose brain is for some unknown cause diseased, and who can show no reason in their actions. Everything in my husband is perfectly balanced. Though he did not actively recognize you, it is not that he did not see you. He has succeeded in detaching himself from his body, and discerns us under some other aspect—what that is, I know not. When he speaks, he utters wondrous things. Only it often happens that he concludes in speech an idea that had its beginning in his mind; or, he may begin a sentence and finish it in thought. To other men he seems insane; to me, living as I do in his mind, his ideas are quite lucid. I follow the road his spirit travels; and though I do not know every turning, I can reach the goal with him.

"Which of us has not often known what it is to think of some futile thing and be led on to some serious reflection through the ideas or memories it brings in its train? Not unfrequently, after speaking about some trifle, the simple

starting-point of a rapid train of reflections, a thinker may forget to be silent as to the abstract connection of ideas leading to his conclusion, and speak again only to utter the last link in the chain of his meditations.

"Inferior minds, to whom this swift mental vision is a thing unknown, who are ignorant of the spirit's inner workings, laugh at the dreamer; and if he is subject to this kind of obliviousness, regard him as a madman. Louis is always in this state; he soars perpetually through the spaces of thought, traversing them with the swiftness of a swallow; I can follow him in his flight. This is the whole history of his madness. Some day, perhaps, Louis will come back to the life in which we vegetate; but if he breathes the air of heaven before the time when we may be permitted to do so, why should we desire to have him down among us? I am content to hear his heart beat, and all my happiness is to be with him. Is he not wholly mine? In three years, twice at intervals he was himself for a few days; once in Switzerland, where we went, and once in an island off the wilds of Brittany, where he took some sea-baths. I have twice been very happy! I can live on memory."

"But do you write down the things he says?" I asked.

"Why should I?" said she.

I was silent; human knowledge was indeed as nothing in this woman's eyes.

"At those times, when he talked a little," she added, "I think I have recorded some of his phrases, but I left it off; I did not understand him then."

I asked her for them by a look; she understood me. This is what I have been able to preserve from oblivion:

I.

Everything here on earth is produced by an ethereal substance which is the common element of various phenomena, known inaccurately as electricity, heat, light, the galvanic fluid, the magnetic fluid, and so forth. The universal distribution of this substance, under various forms, constitutes what is commonly known as Matter.

II.

The brain is the alembic to which the Animal conveys what each of its organizations, in proportion to the strength of that vessel, can absorb of that Substance, which returns it transformed into Will.

The Will is a fluid inherent in every creature endowed with motion. Hence the innumerable forms assumed by the Animal, the results of its combinations with that Substance. The Animal's instincts are the product of the coercion of the environment in which it develops. Hence its variety.

III.

In Man the Will becomes a power peculiar to him, and exceeding in intensity that of any other species.

IV.

By constant assimilation, the Will depends on the Substance it meets with again and again in all its transmutations, pervading them by Thought, which is a product peculiar to the human Will, in combination with the modifications of that Substance.

V.

The innumerable forms assumed by Thought are the result of the greater or less perfection of the human mechanism.

VI.

The Will acts through organs commonly called the five senses, which, in fact, are but one—the faculty of Sight. Feeling and tasting, hearing and smelling, are Sight modified to the transformations of the Substance which Man can absorb in two conditions: untransformed and transformed.

VII.

Everything of which the form comes within the cognizance of the one sense of Sight may be reduced to certain simple

bodies of which the elements exist in the air, the light, or in the elements of air and light. Sound is a condition of the air; colors are all conditions of light; every smell is a combination of air and light; hence the four aspects of Matter with regard to Man—sound, color, smell, and shape—have the same origin, for the day is not far off when the relationship of the phenomena of air and light will be made clear.

Thought, which is allied to Light, is expressed in words which depend on sound. To man, then, everything is derived from the Substance, whose transformations vary only through Number—a certain quantitative dissimilarity, the proportions resulting in the individuals or objects of what are classed as Kingdoms.

VIII.

When the Substance is absorbed in sufficient number (or quantity) it makes of man an immensely powerful mechanism, in direct communication with the very element of the Substance, and acting on organic nature in the same way as a large stream when it absorbs the smaller brooks. Volition sets this force in motion independently of the Mind. By its concentration it acquires some of the qualities of the Substance, such as the swiftness of light, the penetrating power of electricity, and the faculty of saturating a body; to which must be added that it apprehends what it can do.

Still, there is in man a primordial and overruling phenomenon which defies analysis. Men may be dissected completely; the elements of Will and Mind may perhaps be found; but there still will remain beyond apprehension the *x* against which I once used to struggle. That *x* is the Word, the Logos, whose communication burns and consumes those who are not prepared to receive it. The Word is forever generating the Substance.

IX.

Rage, like all our vehement demonstrations, is a current of the human force that acts electrically; its turmoil when

liberated acts on persons who are present even though they be neither its cause nor its object. Are there not certain men who by a discharge of Volition can sublimate the essence of the feelings of the masses?

X.

Fanaticism and all emotions are living forces. These forces in some beings become rivers that gather in and sweep away everything.

XI.

Though Space *is*, certain faculties have the power of traversing it with such rapidity that it is as though it existed not. From your own bed to the frontiers of the universe there are but two steps: Will and Faith.

XII.

Facts are nothing; they do not subsist; all that lives of us is the Idea.

XIII.

The realm of Ideas is divided into three spheres: that of Instinct, that of Abstractions, that of Specialism.

XIV.

The greater part, the weaker part of visible humanity, dwells in the Sphere of Instinct. The *Instinctives* are born, labor, and die without rising to the second degree of human intelligence, namely, Abstraction.

XV.

Society begins in the sphere of Abstraction. If Abstraction, as compared with Instinct, is an almost divine power, it is nevertheless incredibly weak as compared with the gift

of Specialism, which is the formula of God. Abstraction comprises all nature in a germ, more virtually than a seed contains the whole system of a plant and its fruits. From Abstraction are derived laws, arts, social ideas, and interests. It is the glory and the scourge of the earth: its glory because it has created social life; its scourge because it allows man to evade entering into Specialism, which is one of the paths to the Infinite. Man measures everything by Abstractions: Good and Evil, Virtue and Crime. Its formula of equity is a pair of scales, its justice is blind. God's justice sees: there is all the difference.

There must be intermediate Beings, then, dividing the sphere of Instinct from the sphere of Abstractions, in whom the two elements mingle in an infinite variety of proportions. Some have more of one, some more of the other. And there are also some in which the two powers neutralize each other by equality of effect.

XVI.

Specialism consists in seeing the things of the material universe and the things of the spiritual universe in all their ramifications original and causative. The greatest human geniuses are those who started from the darkness of Abstraction to attain to the light of Specialism. (Specialism, *species*, sight; speculation, or seeing everything, and all at once; *Speculum*, a mirror or means of apprehending a thing by seeing the whole of it.) Jesus had the gift of Specialism; He saw each fact in its root and in its results, in the past where it had its rise, and in the future where it would grow and spread; His sight pierced into the understandings of others. The perfection of the inner eye gives rise to the gift of Specialism. Specialism brings with it Intuition. Intuition is one of the faculties of the Inner Man, of which Specialism is an attribute. Intuition acts by an imperceptible sensation of which he who obeys it is not conscious: for instance, Napoleon instinctively moving from a spot struck immediately afterwards by a cannon ball.

XVII.

Between the sphere of Abstraction and that of Specialism, as between those of Abstraction and Instinct, there are beings in whom the attributes of both combine and produce a mixture; these are men of genius.

XVIII.

Specialism is necessarily the most perfect expression of man, and he is the link binding the visible world to the higher worlds; he acts, sees, and feels by his inner powers. The man of Abstraction thinks. The man of Instinct acts.

XIX.

Hence man has three degrees. That of Instinct, below the average; that of Abstraction, the general average; that of Specialism, above the average. Specialism opens to man his true career; the Infinite dawns on him; he sees what his destiny must be.

XX.

There are three worlds—the Natural, the Spiritual, and the Divine. Humanity passes through the Natural world, which is not fixed either in its essence or its faculties. The Spiritual world is fixed in its essence and unfixed in its faculties. The Divine world is fixed in its faculties and its essence both. Hence there is necessarily a Material worship, a Spiritual worship, and a Divine worship: three forms expressed in action, speech, and prayer, or, in other words, in deed, apprehension, and love. Instinct demands deed; Abstraction is concerned with Ideas; Specialism sees the end, it aspires to God with presentiment or contemplation.

XXI.

Hence, perhaps, some day the converse of *Et Verbum caro factum est* will become the epitome of a new Gospel, which will proclaim that the Flesh shall be made the Word and become the Utterance of God.

XXII.

The Resurrection is the work of the Wind of Heaven sweeping over the worlds. The angel borne on the Wind does not say: "Arise, ye dead"; he says, "Arise, ye who live!"

Such are the meditations which I have with great difficulty cast in a form adapted to our understanding. There are some others which Pauline remembered more exactly, wherefore I know not, and which I wrote from her dictation; but they drive the mind to despair when, knowing in what an intellect they originated, we strive to understand them. I will quote a few of them to complete my study of this figure; partly, too, perhaps, because, in these last aphorisms, Lambert's formulas seem to include a larger universe than the former set, which would apply only to zoological evolution. Still, there is a relation between the two fragments, evident to those persons—though they be but few—who love to dive into such intellectual deeps.

I.

Everything on earth exists solely by motion and number.

II.

Motion is, so to speak, number in action.

III.

Motion is the product of a force generated by the Word and by Resistance, which is Matter. But for Resistance, Motion would have had no results; its action would have been infinite. Newton's gravitation is not a law, but an effect of the general law of universal motion.

IV.

Motion, acting in proportion to Resistance, produces a result which is Life. As soon as one or the other is the stronger, Life ceases.

V.

No portion of Motion is wasted; it always produces Number; still, it can be neutralized by disproportionate resistance, as in minerals.

VI.

Number, which produces variety of all kinds, also gives rise to Harmony, which in the highest meaning of the word, is the relation of parts to the whole.

VII.

But for Motion, everything would be one and the same. Its products, identical in their essence, differ only by Number, which gives rise to faculties.

VIII.

Man looks to faculties; angels look to the Essence.

IX.

By giving his body up to elemental action, man can achieve an inner union with the Light.

X.

Number is intellectual evidence belonging to man alone; by it he acquires knowledge of the Word.

XI.

There is a Number beyond which the impure cannot pass: the Number which is the limit of creation.

XII.

The Unit was the starting-point of every product: compounds are derived from it, but the end must be identical

with the beginning. Hence this Spiritual formula: the compound Unit, the variable Unit, the fixed Unit.

XIII.

The Universe is the Unit in variety. Motion is the means; Number is the result. The end is the return of all things to the Unit, which is God.

XIV.

Three and Seven are the two chief Spiritual numbers.

XV.

Three is the formula of created worlds. It is the Spiritual Sign of the creation, as it is the Material Sign of dimension. In fact, God has worked by curved lines only: the Straight Line is an attribute of the Infinite; and man, who has the presentiment of the Infinite, reproduces it in his works. Two is the number of generation. Three is the number of Life which includes generation and offspring. Add the sum of four, and you have Seven, the formula of Heaven. Above all is God; He is the Unit.

After going in to see Louis once more, I took leave of his wife and went home, lost in ideas so adverse to social life that, in spite of a promise to return to Villenoix, I did not go.

The sight of Louis had had some mysteriously sinister influence over me. I was afraid to place myself again in that heavy atmosphere, where ecstasy was contagious. Any man would have felt, as I did, a longing to throw himself into the infinite, just as one soldier after another killed himself in a certain sentry box where one had committed suicide in the camp at Boulogne. It is a known fact that Napoleon was obliged to have the hut burnt which had harbored an idea that had become a mortal infection.

Louis's room had perhaps the same fatal effect as that sentry box.

These two facts would then be additional evidence in favor

of his theory of the transfusion of Will. I was conscious of strange disturbances, transcending the most fantastic results of taking tea, coffee, or opium, of dreams or of fever—mysterious agents, whose terrible action often sets our brains on fire.

I ought perhaps to have made a separate book of these fragments of thought, intelligible only to certain spirits who have been accustomed to lean over the edge of abysses in the hope of seeing to the bottom. The life of that mighty brain, which split up on every side perhaps, like a too vast empire, would have been set forth in the narrative of this man's visions—a being incomplete for lack of force or of weakness; but I preferred to give an account of my own impressions rather than to compose a more or less poetical romance.

Louis Lambert died at the age of twenty-eight, September 25, 1824, in his true love's arms. He was buried by her desire in an island in the park at Villenoix. His tombstone is a plain stone cross, without name or date. Like a flower that has blossomed on the margin of a precipice, and drops into it, its colors and fragrance all unknown, it was fitting that he too should fall. Like many another misprized soul, he had often yearned to dive haughtily into the void, and abandon there the secrets of his own life.

Mlle. de Villenoix would, however, have been quite justified in recording his name on that cross with her own. Since her partner's death, reunion has been her constant, hourly hope. But the vanities of woe are foreign to faithful souls.

Villenoix is falling into ruin. She no longer resides there; to the end, no doubt, that she may the better picture herself there as she used to be. She had said long ago—

"His heart was mine; his genius is with God."

Château de Saché, *June-July* 1832.

MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS

[*Maître Cornélius* made its first appearance in the *Revue de Paris*, December 1831.]

MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS

To M. le Comte George Mniszech.

Some envious beings may imagine on seeing this page adorned by one of the most illustrious of Samartian names that I am trying, as the goldsmiths do, to enhance a modern work with an ancient jewel—one of the fashions of the day. But you, my dear Count, and a few others, will know that I am only aiming at paying the debt I owe to Talent, Memory, and Friendship.

IN 1479, on All-Saints' Day, the time at which this history commences, vespers were just ending in the cathedral of Tours. The Archbishop Hélie de Bourdeilles arose from his throne to himself give the benediction to the faithful. The sermon had been long, and darkness had fallen before its conclusion; and in some portions of the great church, the towers of which were not finished at that time, the densest obscurity prevailed.

However, a goodly number of tapers were burning in honor of the saints, on the triangular frames destined to receive these so pious offerings, the merit and significance of which have never been properly explained. The lights on each altar and the candles of the candelabra in the chancel were all flaming. Most irregularly shed among the forest of columns and arches which support the roof of the main aisles of the cathedral, the gleam of those masses of candles scarcely illumined the vast building; for, by the strong shadows cast by the pillars and projected upward among the galleries, they caused a myriad fantastic effects and increased the gloom that enveloped the arches, the vaulted veilings, and the lateral chapels—which, even at mid-day, were always gloomy.

The immense congregation presented no less picturesque effects. Some figures were so vaguely seen in the uncertain light that they seemed like phantoms; while others, lit up by some chance side-light, drew the attention like the principal heads in a picture. Some statues were animate, some of the men were stone. Here and there eyes might be seen sparkling among the columns; the marble saw, the stone spake, the vaulted groins re-echoed sighs, the whole edifice was instinct with life.

The existence of nations can present no more solemn scenes, no moment more majestic. Mankind in the mass needs motion to make it poetical; but in these resorts of religious thought, when mundane wealth unites itself with celestial splendor, an incredible sublimity is experienced in the silence; there is awe in the bent knees, hope in the upraised hands. The concert of feeling which is ascending heavenward from each soul produces an inexplicable phenomenon of spiritual effect.

The mystical exaltation of the true worshipers reacts upon each individual; the feebler are doubtless upborne upon this flood-tide of faith and love. Prayer, an electric force, draws our nature higher than itself. This involuntary unison of all wills, each equally humbled to earth, equally risen to heaven, contains, doubtless, the secret of the magic influence wielded by the intonations of the priests, the music of the organs, the perfumes and pomps of the altar, the voices of the crowd, its silent meditations.

Therefore we need not be astonished to see in the Middle Ages that so many affairs of the heart began in churches after long ecstatic hours—passions not always ending in sanctity, and for which, as is usually the case, woman did the penance.

In those days religious sentiment certainly was in close affinity to love; either it was the motive or the end of it. Love was but a second religion; it had its fine frenzies, its innocent superstitions, its sublime emotions, all in sympathy with Christianity.

The manners of that period will also serve to explain the alliance existing between religion and love. First, then,

social life had no place of meeting but before the altar. Lords, vassals, men, women were never equals elsewhere. In the church alone could lovers meet and exchange their vows. The festivals of the Church formed our predecessors' theaters; woman's soul was more deeply stirred than to-day it is at an opera or a ball; and does not every strong emotion invariably bring woman around to love?

So, by dint of mingling with life and seizing it in all its acts and interests, religion had become the sharer of every virtue, the accomplice of every vice. Religion had become a science; it was mixed up with politics, eloquence, crime; it entered the skin of the sick man and the poor; it sat on thrones—it was all-pervading. These semi-learned observations may, perhaps, serve to vindicate the veracity of this Study, though certain details may scandalize the more perfect morals of our age, which are, as is known of all, a trifle too strait-laced.

At that moment when the priests stopped their chanting, and the notes of the organ mingled with the vibrant voices of the loud "Amen" as it issued from the deep chests of the choir-men, and sent a murmuring echo through the farther arches, the while the devout assembly awaited the archbishop's benediction, a burgher, impatient to get home or trembling for the safety of his purse in the crowd when the congregation should disperse, quietly slipped out, taking the risk of being called a bad Catholic. On this, a gentleman, who was leaning on one of the enormous columns that surround the choir, where he was enshrouded in the shadows, hastened to take the place so recently vacated by the worthy Tourangeau. Which done, he quickly hid his face behind the tall plumes of his tall, gray cap, and knelt down before his chair with so deep an air of contrition that it might even have deceived an inquisitor.

His immediate neighbors, after observing him closely, seemed to recognize him; after which, as with one accord, they returned to their devotions with a significant shrug expressive of all their thoughts—a caustic, jeering, mocking scandal. Two old women nodded their heads expressively, exchanging glances which seemed to penetrate the future.

The chair into which this young man had glided was near by a chapel built in between two columns, inclosed by an iron railing. It was a custom for the dean and chapter of the cathedral to rent at a high figure to seignorial families, and even to rich burgesses, the right to be present at the services, themselves and their household exclusively, in the various lateral chapels situated along the side-aisles of the cathedral. This simony is practiced even now. Then a woman had her chapel as she now has her box at the opera. The tenants of these privileged places were expected to decorate and keep up the altars therein; and each made it a pride to adorn theirs most sumptuously—a vanity which, needless to say, was not rebuked by the Church.

In this particular chapel a lady was kneeling close to the railing on a handsome rug of red velvet trimmed with gold tassels, and close to the spot but now vacated by the worthy citizen. A silver-gilt lamp hung from the vaulted ceiling of the chapel before the magnificently decorated altar and cast its mild light on the Book of Hours [1] held by the lady. The book trembled violently in her hand as the young man approached her.

"Amen!"

To that response, chanted with a low, sweet, agitated voice, happily submerged in the now general clamor, she rapidly added in a whisper:

"You will ruin me!"

The words were spoken with an innocence to which any man of delicacy would at once have submitted; they reached and pierced the heart. But the stranger, carried away perhaps by one of those paroxysms of passion which stifle conscience, remained in his chair, and slightly raised his head that he might peer into the chapel.

"He sleeps!" he replied in a voice so low that the words could only be heard by the young woman as sound is heard in its own echo.

The lady turned pale; her furtive glance left for an instant the vellum page of the missal and turned on the old man whom the youthful one had designated. What terrible

[1] Prayer-book.

complicity was in that look? When the young woman had cautiously examined the old man, she drew a deep breath and raised her brow, adorned with a precious jewel, to a picture of the Virgin; this simple movement, her attitude, the glistening eye, disclosed her life with ingenuous candor; had she been wicked she would have exercised more dissimulation.

The person who thus inspired these two with terror was a little old hunchback, nearly bald, with a savage expression, and who wore a long, dingy-colored gray beard cut into the shape of a broad fan. On his breast glittered the cross of Saint Michael. His coarse, thick hands were covered with rough gray hairs and had been clasped together, but they had now dropped slightly asunder in the slumber to which he had so imprudently yielded himself. The right hand seemed ready to grasp the dagger, the handle guard of which was of iron in shape like a shell. In the manner in which he had disposed this weapon the hilt was immediately under his hand; if by ill-luck he should touch it he would, beyond doubt, awaken instantly and look at his wife.

His sardonic mouth, the peaked chin, aggressively pushed forward, showed all the characteristics of malignancy, of a coldly cruel sagacity, which would surely enable him to divine all because he suspected all. His yellow forehead was puckered like to those of men who believe nothing, weigh everything, who test the exact meaning of every human act and the meaning thereof. His bodily frame, though deformed, was bony and sinewy; it looked to be both vigorous and irritable; he was, in short, an ogre who had been spoiled in the making.

When this terrible being should awake the young lady was evidently in much danger. That jealous husband would certainly not fail to at once detect the difference between the worthy old burgher, who gave him no umbrage, and the newcomer, a young courtier, slender and elegant.

"*Libera nos a malo*" [deliver us from evil], said she, trying to impart her fears to the young cavalier.

The latter raised his eyes and looked at her. Tears were

in his eyes; the tears of love and despair. When the young lady saw them she trembled and thus betrayed herself. Perhaps both had long resisted and were no longer able to further hold out against a love which increased with each recurring day through invincible obstacles, brooded over by fear, strengthened by youth.

The lady was fairly handsome; but her pallor told of sufferings endured in secret, which made her interesting. Moreover, she had an elegant figure and her hair was the most lovely in the world. Watched over by a tiger, her life was the forfeit if discovered whispering a word, accepting a glance, or in permitting a mere pressure of the hand.

It is possible that love may have been more deeply felt than by those hearts, if never more rapturously confessed, never more enjoyed, but certes it is that never was passion so perilously circumstanced. It is easy to understand that to these two beings the air, the sounds about them, the footfalls and so forth, things of utter indifference to other people, presented hidden qualities, perceptible peculiarities which only they could distinguish. It may be that their love caused them to become faithful interpreters of the touch of the icy hands of the old priest to whom they made their auricular confessions of their sins, and from whose hands they received the Host as they knelt at the holy altar of God. It was a deep love, love gashed into the soul like as a scar is hewn upon the body and which remains during the whole of our life! As these two young people regarded each other, the woman seemed to say to her lover: "Let us perish, but as one." And the young knight made answer: "We are one, but we will not die!"

For her response she made him a sign, indicating the presence of her elderly duenna and two pages.

The duenna slept; the pages were but youthful ones and seemingly careless of what might happen, of good or evil, to their master.

"Do not be alarmed as you leave the church; go and be managed as you may be led."

The young noble had but murmured these words, when the hand of the old seigneur slipped down upon the handle of his

dagger. Feeling the cold touch of the iron he instantly awoke, and his tawny eyes at once fixed themselves upon his wife. By a peculiarity, seldom granted even to men of genius, he awoke with an alert brain and as vivid ideas as though he had never slept.

He was jealous.

The lover, one eye on his mistress, the other on her husband, whom he closely watched, now rose and vanished behind a column at the first movement he had detected in the old man's hands; then he effaced himself swiftly as a bird. The lady's eyes were engaged on her book and she appeared to be quite calm. But try how she might, she could not prevent the flushing of her face nor the unwonted violence of the beating of her heart. The old lord saw the unusual crimson of her cheeks, forehead, and even of her eyelids. He could also hear the vehement throbs of her heart, which were distinctly audible in the chapel. He looked inquisitively around, but not seeing anyone whom he could distrust, said to his wife:

"What troubles you, my dear?"

"The scent of the incense sickens me," she replied.

"Is it particularly unpleasant to-day?" he asked.

Despite this sarcastic query, the wily old man pretended to accept this excuse; but still he suspected some treachery and resolved to watch his treasure more carefully even than he had hitherto done.

The benediction was pronounced. Without waiting for the *Sæcula sæculorum*, the crowd rushed like a heaving torrent to the doors of the church. Following his usual custom, the old lord waited until the general hurry was over; then issued forth, the duenna in front with the youngest page, who carried a lantern on a pole; himself, his wife on arm, being followed by the other page.

As he made his way to the side-door opening on the west nave of the cloister, by which he generally went out, a stream of people detached itself from the flood which obstructed the great portals and surged through the aisle around the old noble and his people. The mass was impacted too solidly to allow of his retracing his steps; and the gentleman and

his wife were therefore pushed onward to the door by the tremendous pressure of the crowd behind them.

The husband tried to pass out first, dragging the lady by her arm, but just then he was jerked vigorously into the street and his wife snatched from him by a stranger. The sinister hunchback at once saw that he had fallen into a trap, and one that had been cleverly arranged.

It was now he repented himself that he had slept; but he collected his whole strength, seized his wife once more by the sleeve of her gown and with his other tried to cling fast to the door-post of the church; but love's ardor carried the day against jealous rage. The young man clasped his mistress round the waist and tore her away with the strength of despair; so violent was the disruption that the stuff of silk and gold was rent noisily apart, the brocade and whalebone gave way, and the old man remained standing with naught save the sleeve in his clutch.

A roar like that of a lion rose above the tumult of the multitude, and a terrible voice was heard bawling out the words:

"To me, Poitiers! Help; here to the door! The Comte de Saint-Vallier's retainers, here, help!"

And the Comte Aymar de Poitiers, Sire de Saint-Vallier, attempted to draw his sword and clear a space around him. But he found himself pressed upon and surrounded by forty or fifty gentlemen whom it were most dangerous to wound. Several of these, especially of the highest rank, replied gibingly to him as they dragged him along the cloisters.

With a lightning-like celerity the abductor carried the countess to an open chapel, seating her on a wooden bench behind a confessional box. By the light of the candles burning before the saint to whom the chapel was dedicated they gazed upon each other for a silent moment, clasped hands, and amazed at their audacity. The Countess could not summon the cruel courage to blame the young man for the boldness to which they owed this first and only instant of happiness.

"Will you fly with me into the adjacent States?" asked the young man eagerly. "Two English horses are await-

ing us near-by which are able to do thirty leagues at a stretch."

"Ah!" she cried softly, "in what corner of the world could you find a hiding-place for a daughter of King Louis XI.?"

"True," answered the young man, silenced by a difficulty he had not anticipated.

"Why, then, did you tear me from my husband?" she asked in a voice of terror.

"Alas!" replied the young lover, "I did not guess at the agitation I should experience in finding myself by your side, in hearing your voice as you spoke to me. I had arranged plans, two or three schemes, and now that I see you, I feel as if all were accomplished."

"But I am lost!" said the Countess.

"We are saved!" the young man cried in the blind enthusiasm of love. "Listen carefully to me."

"This will cost me my life!" said she, letting the tears that filled her eyes go rolling down her cheeks. "The Count will kill me—perhaps this very night! But go you to the King; tell him all the tortures his daughter has endured these five years. He loved me well when I was a child; he used to laugh and call me 'Marie-full-of-grace,' because I was so ugly. Ah! could he only know to what a man he gave me, his anger would be terrible. I have never dared complain out of a sense of pity for the Count. Beside, how could my plaint reach the ears of the King? Even my confessor is but a spy of Saint-Vallier. That is why I consented to this criminal meeting, hoping to find a champion —someone who will declare the truth to the King. But—may I dare trust? Oh!" she cried, turning pale and interrupting herself, "here comes the page."

The distraught Countess put her hands before her face and tried to veil it.

"Fear nothing," said the young lord, "he is ours! You may safely trust him; he belongs to me. When the count contrives to return to you, he will give us timely warning. In the confessional," he added in a muttered tone, "is a priest, a friend of mine; he will say that he rescued you

from the turmoil, and drew you here for safety out of the crowd, and gave you his protection in this chapel. Thus all is arranged to deceive him."

At these words the Countess dried her tears, but a saddened expression clouded her face.

"He cannot be deceived," said she. "To-night he will know all. Beware his revenge. Save me from his blows. At once to Le Plessis, see the King, tell him——;" here she hesitated; but some dreadful memory gave her courage to disclose some secrets of her married life, so she continued:

"Yes, tell him that to obtain the mastery over me the Count has me bled in both arms—to exhaust me. Tell him that my husband drags me around by my hair; tell him that I am a prisoner; say that——"

Her heart was bursting, sobs choked her throat, tears rained from her eyes. In her agitation she allowed the young man to kiss her hand, the while he muttered broken, inconsecutive words.

"Poor love! No one may speak to the King. Although my uncle is chief master of his bowmen, I cannot obtain admission to Le Plessis. My darling lady! my most beautiful queen! Oh! but what has she not suffered? Marie, at least let me say two words to you, or we are assuredly lost."

"What will become of us?" she murmured. Then, discerning on the dark wall a picture of the Virgin on which the light fell from the lamp, she cried out:

"Holy Mother of God, give us counsel!"

"To-night," said the young man, "I shall be in your room with you."

"How?" was her naïve question.

"This evening I go to propose myself as an apprentice to Maître Cornélius, the King's silversmith. To him I bear a letter of introduction which will compel him to receive me. His house is next to yours. Once under the roof of that old scoundrel I can, by the aid of a silken ladder, soon find my way to your suite of rooms."

"Oh!" said she, petrified with horror, "if you love me, do not go to Maître Cornélius."

"Ah!" cried he, pressing her to his heart with all the energy of youth, "then, indeed, you do love me!"

"Yes," said she. "Are you not my sole hope? Beside," she added, regarding him with dignity, "you are a gentleman, I confide myself to your honor. So unhappy am I that you will never betray my trust. But to what end is all this? Go, the rather let me die than that you should abide in the house of Maître Cornélius. Do you not know that all his apprentices——"

"Have been hanged?" said the young noble, laughing.

"But do not go; you will become the victim of some sorcery."

"I cannot pay a too high price for the great honor of serving you," said he, with a look of such ardor that her eyes drooped under it.

"And my husband?" said she.

"Here is that will cause him to sleep," answered the young man, drawing a small phial from his belt.

"Not forever?" queried the Countess, tremblingly.

For all reply the young seigneur made a gesture of horror.

"I would long ago have defied him to mortal combat if it were not for his great age," said he. "But God preserve me from ridding his life by a philter."

"Forgive me," said the Countess, blushing. "My sins have cruelly punished me. In a moment of despair I have thought of killing the Count—I feared you might have the same desire. So great has my sorrow been that as yet I have never been able to confess the so wicked thought; I believed it would be repeated to him, and then he would be avenged on me. I have shamed you," she went on, distressed by his silence. "Well, I deserve your blame!"

She flung the phial with great violence to the ground and it was broken.

"Do not come," said she, "it is that my husband sleeps lightly; my duty demands that I await the help of Heaven—that will I do."

She arose to leave the chapel. "Ah!" cried the young man, "but bid me kill him and I will do it. You will see me this evening, madame."

"I showed wisdom in destroying that drug," she murmured in a voice husky with joy at finding herself so ardently loved. "The dread of arousing my husband will save us from ourselves."

"I pledge you my life," said the young man, pressing her hand.

"Should the King be willing, the pope can annul my marriage; then we may be united," she cried, giving him a look full of delicious hopes.

"Monseigneur comes!" exclaimed the page, bustling in.

Instantly the young noble, surprised at the short time he had gained with his mistress and greatly wondering at the Count's celerity, snatched a kiss which the Countess could not refuse.

"To-night," said he, as he hastily slipped out of the chapel.

Thanks to the darkness, the lover made his way to the great portal in safety, gliding from pillar to pillar in the long shadows which they cast across the nave. An old canon suddenly issued from the confessional, came to the side of the Countess and gently closed the railing, while the page gravely marched up and down with the manner of a sentry.

A blaze of light heralded the coming of the Count. He was accompanied by a number of his friends and by servants bearing torches; himself advanced, drawn sword in hand. His gloomy gaze seemed to pierce the dense cathedral shadows and to rake the remotest depths.

"Monseigneur, madame is there," said the page to him.

The Count de Saint-Vallier found his wife kneeling on the steps before the altar, the canon standing alongside reading his breviary. At the sight the Count violently shook the railing, as if to give vent to his fury.

"What want you here in church, with a drawn sword?" asked the old priest.

"Father, this is my husband," said the Countess.

The priest took a key out of his sleeve and unlocked the railed gate of the chapel. The Count, almost against his will, cast an eye into the confessional, then entered the

chapel, and seemed to be listening to the silence of the place.

"Monsieur," said his wife, "you owe your thanks to this venerable canon for giving me a refuge here."

The Comte de Saint-Vallier turned pale with anger; he dared not look at his friends, who had come less with the intention of assisting than of laughing at him. Then he curtly answered:

"Thank the Lord, my father, for I will surely find some way to repay you."

He took his wife by the arm, and, without giving her an opportunity to finish the courtesy she was making to the canon, he signed to his retainers and left the church without uttering a word to those who had accompanied him. His silence was ominous.

Impatient to reach his castle and occupied as he was in an effort to get at the truth, he made his way through the tortuous street which at that time separated the cathedral from the chancellerie, a fine building but recently erected by the Chancellor Juvénal des Ursins, on the site of an old fortress given by Charles VII. to that faithful servant as a guerdon for his splendid services. This street, the Rue de la Scellerie, so named in honor of the office of the Great Seal which long stood there, connected old Tours with Châteauneuf, where was the noted abbey of Saint-Martin, of which many kings had been glad to be elected canons. After long discussions this borough had been incorporated with the city; this had been so now for nearly a hundred years.

At last the Count reached the Rue du Mûrier, in which his dwelling, the Hôtel de Poitiers, was situated. When the escort had passed the gates into the courtyard, and they had been closed after them, a profound silence pervaded the narrow street where a few high seigneurs at that time had residences; for this new suburb of the town was near to Le Plessis, the King's usual place of abode, and where the courtiers when summoned could instantly go. The last house in the street was also the last in the town. It belonged to Maître Cornélius Hoogworst, an old merchant of Brabant, to whom Louis XI. gave his closest confidences in

the various financial dealings which his cunning policy required done outside his own kingdom. For the favorable opportunity it gave to his tyranny over his wife, the Comte de Saint-Vallier had taken the mansion next to the house of Maître Cornélius.

An explanation of the houses will show the advantages offered the jealous husband. It was easy to be seen that the same architect had built both of them, and that they were destined as the abodes of tyrants. The Count's house had been built near the old boundary of the city, and was inclosed in a garden. On the side next the embankment, lately constructed by Louis XI. between Tours and Le Plessis, dogs defended the entrance to the premises; while on the east they were divided from the nearest houses by a large courtyard; on the west backed up the house occupied by Maître Cornélius.

Each was of sinister aspect and resembled a small fort, which could be well defended against a turbulent populace. The riots and civil wars of this period amply justified these precautions. The windows looking on the street were strongly barred with iron, and shutters of the same material. A stone block used for mounting horseback stood close to the porch.

As six o'clock was striking from the great tower of the Abbey Saint-Martin, the lover of the hapless countess walked past the de Poitiers hôtel and paused there for a moment to listen for any sound made by the servants in the lower hall, who were taking their suppers. Casting a glance at the window of the room he supposed to be his mistress's, he went on his way to the next house. Everywhere on his way the young man had heard the roistering of the jolly holiday-makers, in honor of the day. The badly joined blinds let out beams of light, the chimneys smoked, the pleasant savor of roasting meats pervaded the town. Religious services being over, the inhabitants were regaling themselves with confused mutterings of satisfaction, more readily imagined than described. But here deep silence reigned, for in those two dwellings lived two passions which can never rejoice.

Beyond them stretched the silent country, while these

two dwellings standing beneath the towers of Saint-Martin, standing apart from the others in the street, at the crooked end of it, seemed afflicted with leprosy. The opposite building was the property of some State criminal and was under the ban of the law. No young man but would have been struck by the great contrast. About, as he was, to fling himself into a horribly hazardous enterprise, it is not to be wondered at that the daring young noble stopped short before the door of the silversmith-treasurer, and called to mind the many uncanny tales he had heard of the life of Maître Cornélius—tales which had caused such untoward terror to the Countess.

In this time a man of war, a lover even, every man trembled at the word "magic." Few indeed were the minds whose imaginations were incredulous of occult forces and tales of the marvelous. This lover of the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, one of the daughters of Louis XI. by Mme. de Sassenage, and born in Dauphiné, courageous as he was in other respects, was apt to think twice before entering the house of a sorcerer.

The history of Maître Cornélius Hoogworst will fully explain the confidence he had inspired in the Count, the terrible fear of the Countess, and the hesitation to which the lover now made pause. To enable the nineteenth-century reader to clearly understand how such seeming commonplace events could be turned into something supernatural, and to cause them to share the dread of that olden time, it is necessary to interrupt the course of the narrative and cast a glance at the preceding life and career of Maître Cornélius.

Cornélius Hoogworst, one of the richest merchants of Ghent, having drawn upon himself the resentment of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, had found a refuge and protection at the Court of Louis XI. The King was well aware of the advantages he could gain from a man connected with all the principal houses of commerce of Flanders, Venice, and the East; he naturalized and ennobled—by royal letters—and, more, flattered Maître Cornélius; a most rare thing with that monarch. Louis XI. pleased the Fleming as much as the

Fleming pleased the King. Wily, suspicious, avaricious; equally politic, equally well informed; both superior to their time; each understanding the other marvelously; they discarded and resumed with equal facility, the one his conscience, the other his religion; they worshiped the same Virgin—one from conviction, the other from policy; in short, if we may trust the jealous statements of Olivier le Daim and Tristan, the King resorted to the Fleming's house for those diversions with which King Louis XI. amused himself. History has been at the pains to preserve to the knowledge of posterity the licentious tastes of this monarch who was certainly not averse to debauchery. No doubt the Fleming derived both pleasure and profit in lending himself to the caprices and indulgences of his royal client.

Cornélius at this time had lived for nine years in the city of Tours. During these nine years extraordinary events had occurred in his house, which had made him the object of universal execration. On his arrival he had spent immense sums in order to safely guard his treasures. The curious inventions secretly made for him by the locksmiths of the town, the singular precautions he took to bring them to his house in a way to compel their silence, were for a long time the subject of countless tales, which furnished the evening gossip of the Tourangeaux. These peculiar devices on the part of the old man caused everyone to believe him the possessor of Oriental wealth. Consequently the story-tellers of that district—the birthplace of French romance—built rooms full of gold and precious stones in the Fleming's house, not omitting to ascribe this fabulous wealth to compacts with unholy genii.

Maître Cornélius had brought with him from Ghent two Flemish servants, an old woman and a young apprentice; the latter, youthful, with a gentle, attractive appearance, served as his secretary, cashier, factotum, and messenger. During the first year of his settlement in Tours a considerable robbery was effected on his premises; judicial inquiry showed that the crime must have been committed by one of its inmates. The old man had his two men-servants and appren-

Note.—The king's silversmith was also his treasurer.

tice put in prison. The young lad was weakly and he died under the sufferings of the "question," [1] still protesting his innocence. The two men confessed the crime to escape torture; but when asked by the judge where the stolen property could be found, they kept silence; so, after renewed tortures, they were tried, condemned, and hung. On their way to the gallows they declared themselves innocent, as is the custom of all men when about to be executed.

For many a day the town of Tours talked over this singular business; but the criminals were Flemish, and the interest in their unhappy fate, and that of the young clerk, soon evaporated. In those days, wars and seditions supplied continual excitement, and each day's new drama eclipsed that of the preceding night.

More affected by the loss of his pelf than by the death of his three servants, Maître Cornélius lived alone in the house with the old Flemish woman, his sister. From the King he obtained the privilege to use the royal couriers for his private affairs; sold his mules to a muleteer in the neighborhood, and lived thenceforward in the deepest solitude, seeing no one but the King, and transacting his business through the medium of Jews, who, shrewd arithmeticians, served him faithfully and well for the sake of his so-powerful interest.

Some time after this affair, the King himself placed with his old *torçonnoir* a young orphan in whom he took much interest. Louis XI. called Maître Cornélius by that obsolete term, familiarly, which under the reign of Saint-Louis meant a usurer, a collector of taxes, a man who squeezed money out of folk by extortion. The term *tortionnaire*, which is a legal term still extant, explains the old French word *torçonnier*, and which is often spelled *tortionneur*.

The poor young boy devoted himself to the interest of his master, the old Fleming, and succeeded in winning his encomiums and getting into his good graces. One winter's night the diamonds placed in Cornélius's keeping by the King of England as security for a hundred thousand crowns were stolen; suspicion naturally fell on the poor orphan. Louis XI. was the more severe with him because he had

[1] Torture to induce confession.

vouched for the boy's fidelity. So, after a very brief examination by the grand provost, the unfortunate youth was taken out and hanged. After that it was a long time before anyone dared to go to learn the art of banking and exchange from Maître Cornélius.

In the course of time, however, it came that two young men of the town, Tourangeaux, men of honor, eager to make their fortunes, took service with the silversmith. Large robberies coincided with the admission of the two youths into the house. The circumstances of these crimes, the manner of the perpetration, plainly enough showed some collusion between the thieves and the inmates of the house; how was it possible that the newcomers should escape accusation? Become by this time more than ever suspicious and vindictive, the old Fleming laid the matter before the King, who placed the case in the hands of his grand provost. A trial was promptly had, and more quickly finished. Each was more promptly executed.

But the inhabitants of Tours, in their patriotism, secretly blamed Tristan l'Hermite for unseemly haste. Guilty or not guilty, the young fellow-townsmen were looked upon as victims, and Cornélius as an executioner. The two families thus thrown into mourning were of much esteem; their complaints secured much sympathy, and, little by little, they succeeded in making it come to be common belief that all the victims sent to the scaffold by the King's silversmith were innocent. Some went so far as to say that the cruel miser imitated the King and sought to put terror and the gibbet between himself and the world of men; others there were who declared he had never been robbed at all—that these terrible executions were brought about as the result of cold calculation; that all he cared about was to be relieved of all care for his treasure.

The first effect of these rumors was to effectually isolate Maître Cornélius. The good people of Tours treated him as they would have done a leper; called him the *tortionnaire*, and named his house Malemaison—House of Evil. Even if the Fleming could have found strangers to the town bold enough to enter his service, the inhabitants of the town

would have prevented by their warnings. The most favorable impression had of Maître Cornélius was that of those who considered him as being merely baneful and sinister. Some he inspired with instinctive dread; others were impressed with the power that is always paid to great wealth and influence; to some he had the fascination of mystery. His mode of life, his countenance, and the favor of the King seemed to justify all the rumors of which he was the subject.

After the death of his persecutor, the Duke of Burgundy, Cornélius traveled much in foreign lands; during his absence the King caused his house to be patrolled by a company of his Scottish Guard. This royal solicitude it was that made the courtiers believe that Maître Cornélius had bequeathed his property to Louis XI. When he was home it was but rarely that he left his premises; the gentlemen of the Court frequently visited him, and he loaned them money rather liberally, though he was very capricious about so doing. On certain days he refused them a sou; the next day he would offer large sums—always, though, at high interest and on undoubtedly good security. He was a good Catholic, went regularly to the services, and always attended the earliest Mass at Saint-Martin's; and as he had purchased there a chapel in perpetuity, as elsewhere, he was separated even in church from other Christians. A popular proverb of that day, and one long remembered, was the saying: "You passed in front of the usurer; evil will befall you." To pass in front of the Fleming explained every misfortune; it explained all sudden pains and evil, involuntary depression, bad turns of fortune among the people of Tours. Even at Court the people more often than not attributed to Cornélius that fatal influence which Italian, Spanish, and Asiatic superstition has termed the "Evil Eye."

Only for the terrible power of Louis XI., which overspread his house like a mantle, the populace on the least pretext would have utterly demolished La Malemaison—that "evil house" in the Rue du Mûrier. And yet it was Cornélius that was the first to plant mulberry trees in Tours, and at that time the Tourangeaux looked upon him as their good genie. Who may depend on popular favor?

A few seigneurs having met Maître Cornélius on his journeys out of France, had been astonished at his friendliness and good-humor. At Tours he was always gloomy and absent-minded, but yet he returned there. Some inexplicable attraction brought him back to his dismal house in the Rue du Mûrier. Like a snail, whose life is so strongly a part of its shell, he admitted to the King that he was not at his ease elsewhere; he only found it under the bolts and time-worn stone of his little bastille; and yet he was well aware that should the King die it would be the most dangerous spot on earth for him.

"The Devil is amusing himself at the expense of our crony the *torçonnier*," said Louis XI. to his barber, a few days before the Festival of All-Saints. "He says he has been robbed again, but he can't hang anybody this time, unless he hangs himself. The old vagabond came and asked me if I had not chanced to carry off a string of rubies that he had intended selling to me. '*Pasques-Dieu!* I don't steal what I have only to take,' said I."

"And was he afraid?" asked the barber.

"Misers are only afraid of one thing," responded the King. "My chum the *torçonnier* knows very well that I shall not plunder him for nothing; otherwise I were unjust, and I have never yet done anything but what is just and necessary."

"And yet that old bandit overcharges you," replied the barber.

"You only wish he did, don't you?" answered the King, with a sinister look at the barber.

"By Mahomet's belly, Sire, the inheritance would be a noble one, between you, me, and the Devil."

"There, there!" said the King. "Don't put bad ideas into my head. My crony is a more faithful man than many whose fortunes I have made—it may be it is because he owes me nothing."

For the two last years, Maître Cornélius had lived entirely alone with his old sister, who was believed to be a witch. A tailor who lived hard by declared that he had frequently seen her at night, on the roof of the house, looking out for the

witches' Sabbath. This seemed the more extraordinary, as it was known to be the miser's custom to lock up his sister in her bedroom when night came, the windows of which were barred with iron.

As he grew older, Cornélius, always afraid of being robbed or duped by men, came to hate everybody but the King, whom he highly esteemed. He had sunk into a state of abject misanthropy; but, like most misers, his passion for gold, the assimilation, as it were, of that metal with his very substance, became more and more complete, while age but intensified it. He was even suspicious of his sister, though she was a shade the more miserly and rapacious than her brother, and really surpassed him in penurious inventiveness. Their way of life was a mysterious enigma. The old woman rarely took bread of the baker; so seldom she appeared in the market, that the least credulous of the townsfolk at last attributed to her some diabolical knowledge of a secret for maintaining life. Others there were who dabbled in alchemy that declared that Maître Cornélius possessed the power of making gold. Men of science stated that he had discovered the Universal Panacea. According to most of the country people, when they spoke of him, Cornélius was a chimerical being, and a number came to view his house out of mere curiosity.

The young seigneur, whom we left in front of that house, looked about him, first at the Hôtel de Poitiers, the home of his mistress, and then at the Malemaison. The moonbeams shed their light on the prominent parts, giving a tint of light and shadow in the carvings and reliefs. The caprices of this white light gave a sinister expression to both edifices; it seemed as if nature had tried to encourage the superstitious dread that hung around the place.

The young man called to mind the many traditions which made Cornélius such a strange and formidable person. Though the violence of his passion still held him to the decision of entering that house, and to stay there long enough to accomplish his purpose, he yet hesitated at taking the final step, all the time aware that he would at last do this. But what man is there who, in a crisis of his life, does

not willingly pay heed to presentiments, and gyrate, as it were, over the precipice of uncertainty? A lover worthy of his love, the young man feared he might perish before the love of the Countess should crown his life.

His mental deliberation was so painfully absorbing that he did not feel the cold wind that whistled round his legs and against the buildings. On entering that house he must lay aside his name, as he already had laid aside the handsome garb of a noble. In case of disaster he would be unable to claim the privileges of his rank or the protection of his friends without destroying the Countess of Saint-Vallier. If her old husband suspected her of having a lover paying nocturnal visits, he was quite capable of roasting her alive in an iron cage by a slow fire, or of killing her by degrees in the depths of some dank dungeon.

Looking over his shabby clothes in which he was disguised, the young man felt ashamed of his appearance. His black leather belt, his heavy shoes, ribbed hose, frieze breeches, and his gray woolen doublet made him look like the clerk of some poor devil of a justice. To a nobleman of the fifteenth century it was like to death itself to play the part of a mean burgher, and renounce the privileges of his rank. But yet, to climb the roof of the house where his mistress was weeping; to descend the chimney or crawl along the cornice from gutter to gutter to the window of her room; to risk his life if haply he might sit by her side before a glowing fire, during the slumber of a dangerous husband, whose every snore would add to their rapture; to defy both heaven and earth in exchanging the most audacious embrace; to say no word which would not be the certainty of death, or at least of bloody combat, if overheard—these all-entrancing visions, with the romantic perils of the adventure, made the decision of the young man.

However slight the guerdon of his endeavor might be, could he but once more kiss the hand of his lady, he would venture all, urged on by the peril-loving, passionate spirit of his age. Never for one moment did he think that the Countess would refuse him the sweetest reward of love in the midst of such

mortal danger. The adventure was too perilous, too impossible, not to be attempted to carry out.

Suddenly every bell in the town rang out the curfew—a custom elsewhere fallen into desuetude, but still observed in the country—for in the provinces customs die slowly. Though the lights were not extinguished, the watchman placed the chains across the streets. Many doors were barred and bolted; the steps of a few belated citizens were heard in the distance, attended by their servants, armed to the teeth and bearing lanterns. Soon the town, garroted, as it were, seemed to be slumbering, fearing naught of robbers and malefactors except by the roofs. At that time the roofs of houses were like a highway, so thronged were they at night.

The streets were so narrow in the country towns, and even in Paris, that robbers could jump from the roofs on one side on to those of the other. This perilous game was once the delight of King Charles IX. in his youth, if we may put faith in the chronicles of his day.

Fearing that he might be too late in presenting himself to the old Maître Cornélius, the young noble now went up to the Malemaison, intending to knock at the door, when, on looking at it, his attention was excited by a kind of vision, which the writers of that day would have termed devilish (*cornue*), perhaps with reference to horns and hoofs. He rubbed his eyes to clear them, a thousand diverse ideas coursing through his mind the while at the spectacle before him. On each side of the door was a face framed between the bars in a kind of loophole. At first he took these faces to be grotesque gargoyles carved in stone, so angular, so distorted, exaggerated, motionless, and discolored were they; but presently the cold wind and the moonlight enabled him to detect the thin white mist which living breath sent out from two blue noses; at last he could make out in each hollow face, beneath the shadow of the eyebrows, a pair of blue china eyes casting fire like those of a wolf crouching in the brushwood when it hears the bay of the hounds in full cry. The uneasy gleam of those eyes was turned on him so fixedly that for quite a minute's space he felt like a bird

put up by a pointer-dog; a fever-spasm struck his soul, but it was at once repressed. The two faces, strained and suspicious, were beyond a doubt those of Cornélius and his sister.

The young man pretended to be gazing around him, as if in uncertainty as to his whereabouts, and to be searching for a dwelling the address of which might be on the card he took from his pocket and was trying to read by the moonlight; then straight to the door he walked and struck three blows upon it, which echoed within as though it had been the entrance to a cavern. A faint light became visible beneath the door, and an eye was seen at a small and strongly barred wicket-gate.

"Who is there?"

"A friend, sent by Oosterlinck, of Brussels."

"What do you want?"

"To come in."

"Your name?"

"Philippe Goulenoire."

"Have you credentials?"

"Here they are."

"Put them in through the box."

"Where is it?"

"To your left."

Philippe Goulenoire put the letter through the slit of an iron box above which was a loophole.

"The devil!" thought he, "It is very evident that the King comes here, as they say he does; he could not take more precautions at Le Plessis."

For over a quarter of an hour he waited on the street. At the end of that time he heard the old man say to his sister—

"Close the traps of the door."

A clanging of chains sounded from within. Philippe heard the bolts slide, the locks creak, and finally a small, low door, iron-bound, opened just the smallest chink through which a man could press. At the risk of tearing his clothes, Philippe squeezed rather than walked himself into La Malemaison. A toothless old woman with a hatchet face.

eyebrows like the handle of a caldron, who could not have put a nut between her nose and chin so near were they together—a pallid, haggard creature, her hollow temples made up only, or so it seemed, of bones and sinews—silently preceded the stranger into a lower chamber, Cornélius prudently following him.

" Seat yourself there," said she to Philippe, pointing out a three-legged stool, standing beside a huge, carved fireplace of stone; the hearth though was fireless.

On the other side of the fireplace was a walnut-wood table with twisted legs, on which were an egg on a plate and ten or a dozen of little bread-sops, hard and dry, each cut with parsimonious exactitude. Two stools placed beside the table, on one of which the old woman seated herself, showed that the miserly pair were about supping.

Cornélius went to the door and closed two iron shutters, thus most likely securing the looped windows through which they had been gazing out on the street; then he returned to his seat. Philippe Goulenoire, as he called himself, next saw the brother and sister dipping each their sops in turns into the egg, and with the perfect gravity and precision that soldiers use in dipping their spoons in regular rotation into the mess-pan. This performance was gone through in perfect silence. But as he ate Cornélius studied the mock apprentice with as much carefulness and shrewdness as if he had been gold coin in the balance.

Philippe felt, as it might be, an icy cloak had fallen on his shoulders, he was tempted to look around; but with the circumspection born of an amorous adventure he was careful not to glance, even furtively, at the walls, for he was well aware that so suspicious a person as Cornélius would not house an inquisitive inmate. He restricted himself to the modest contemplation of first the egg, then the old woman, and anon his future master.

Louis XI.'s silversmith-treasurer resembled that monarch. He had even caught the same tricks of expression, as often happens where persons dwell in a kind of quasi intimacy. The thick eyebrows of the Fleming almost concealed his eyes, but by raising them a little he could flash out a glance that

was bright, penetrating, and full of power, the look of men habituated to silence, and to whom concentration of thought is familiar. His thin lips, finely furrowed with vertical lines, gave him an air of keen subtlety. The lower part of the face bore a vague resemblance to a fox; but a lofty, prominent forehead, deeply indented with wrinkles, bespoke great and noble qualities and nobility of soul—one whose flights had been degraded by experience and whence the cruel lessons of life had driven it back into the farthest recesses of his strange humanity. Most certainly he was no ordinary miser; his passion covered, no doubt, the highest pleasures and secret conceptions.

"At what rate are Venetian sequins going?" he abruptly asked his to be apprentice.

"Three-fourths at Brussels; one at Ghent."

"What is the freight on the Scheldt?"

"Three sous parisis."

"Anything new in Ghent?"

"The brother of Liéven d'Herde is ruined."

"Ah!"

After giving vent to this exclamation, the old man spread the skirts of his dalmation over his knees—this was a sort of robe made of black velvet, open in front, wide sleeves, no collar, the sumptuous material being much worn and shiny. This corpse of a magnificent costume he had formerly worn as president of the tribunal of the Parchons—a position which had earned him the enmity of the Duke of Burgundy—was now but a mere rag.

Philippe was not cold, he perspired in the harness he had assumed, dreading further questioning. Thus far the brief information he had extracted the day before, from a Jew whose life he had saved, had been enough—thanks to his good memory and to the Jew's perfect understanding of the customs of Maître Cornélius and his habits and manners. But the young man, who in his first flush of enthusiasm had feared nothing, now began to perceive the difficulties of his undertaking. The solemn, grave manner of the Fleming reacted upon himself; he felt himself under lock and key and remembered that the urbane Grand Provost

Tristan and his rope obeyed the behest of Maître Cornélius.

"Have you supped?" asked the miser in a tone which implied an affirmative answer.

The old maid, despite her brother's tone, trembled as she looked at the new inmate, as if gauging the capacity of the stomach she might have to fill, then said with a specious grin:

"You do not belie your name; your hair and mustache are both black as the devil's tail."

"I have supped," said he.

"Well, then," replied the usurer, "you can come and see me again to-morrow. I have had no apprentice for a number of years. Beside, in the night comes wisdom."

"Hey! by Saint-Bavon, monsieur, I am from Flanders; I know not one soul in this place; the chains are up in the streets; I shall be thrown into prison. However," he went on, alarmed at his own temerity, "if it suits your good pleasure, of course I will go."

The oath had a singular effect on the old man.

"Come, then, by Saint-Bavon! You shall sleep here."

"But——" began his sister.

"Silence," said Cornélius. "In his letter Oosterlinck says that he will be answerable for this young man. You well know," he whispered in his sister's ear, "that we have a hundred thousand livres here belonging to Oosterlinck. Is that not security enough?"

"And suppose he steals the Bavarian jewels? He looks more like a thief than a Fleming."

"Hark!" said the old man, listening attentively.

The two misers listened. An instant after the "hark" uttered by Cornélius, a noise caused by men's footsteps echoed in the distance on the other side of the town moat.

"The guard of Le Plessis is on its rounds," said the sister.

"Give me the key to the apprentices' room," Cornélius continued.

The old woman was about to take up the lamp.

"What, do you mean to leave us alone together without a light?" exclaimed Cornélius in a voice eloquent with some

hidden meaning. "Old as you are you ought to be able to see in the dark. It is not so difficult to find a key."

The sister evidently understood the meaning hidden in these words and left the room. As he looked at this singular creature, as she made her way toward the door, Philippe was able to hide the glance from Cornélius that he cast around the room. It was wainscoted halfway up with oak, the walls were hung with yellow leather stamped out with black arabesques; but what most struck the young man was a match-lock musket with its long spring dagger attached. This then new and terrible weapon lay close to Cornélius.

"How do you expect to earn your living with me?" asked the miser.

"I have but little money," said Philippe, "but I know some good business schemes. If you give me but one sou on every mark I make you, I shall be satisfied."

"A sou! a sou," spoke out the miser, "why, that's a great deal!"

At this time re-entered the old hag with the key.

"Come," said Cornélius to Philippe.

The pair went out beneath the portico and mounted a spiral stairway of stone, the circular well of which rose through a turret by the side of the room they had occupied. On the second floor the young man came to a stand.

"Nay, nay," cried Cornélius, "the devil! why, this is the cranny in which the King enjoys himself."

The architect had constructed the room used for the apprentices' lodging under the pointed roof of the turret up which the stairs wound. It was a little circular room, the walls of stone, cold and bare of ornament. The tower stood in the center of the façade on the courtyard, which was like all country courtyards—narrow and dark. At the farther end, through an iron grating, could be seen a wretched garden, in which only the mulberries grew that Cornélius had introduced. The young noble could take in these details through the loopholes of the turret, the moon, luckily, casting a brilliant light.

A cot, a stool, an unmatched pitcher and basin, and a flimsy chest comprised the furniture in the room. The light

could only enter through little square slits, placed at intervals in the wall of the tower, corresponding, no doubt, to the ornamentation of the outside.

"Here is your lodging," said Cornélius; "it is plain and substantial, and contains all that is needed for sleep. Good-night! Do not leave this room as the others did."

After giving his apprentice a last look fraught with divers meanings, Cornélius double-locked the door, took away the key and went down the stairs, leaving the young fellow as much befooled as a bell-founder who, on opening his mold, finds it empty. Alone, without a light, seated on a stool in this small garret-room from which so many of his predecessors had gone to the gallows, the young noble felt like a wild beast caught in a trap. He jumped on to the stool and stood on tiptoe to peer out of one of the little slits through which shone a faint glimmer of light. From thence he could see the Loire, the lovely slopes of Saint-Cyr, the somber splendor of Le Plessis, where a few lights were gleaming in the deep recesses of the windows. Farther away lay the beautiful meadows of Touraine and the silvery stream of the great river. Every point of this lovely landscape wore, just then, a mysterious charm; the windows, the waters, the roofs of the houses glistened like diamonds in the trembling rays of the moon.

The soul of the young noble could not altogether repress some tender, sweet, and sad emotions.

"Suppose this is my last farewell!" said he to himself.

As he stood there, he already felt the terrible emotion his adventure promised him; he yielded to the fears of a prisoner who still retains a gleam of hope. His mistress brightened each difficulty. To him she was no more a woman, she became a supernatural being seen in the incense vapors of his hot desire. A feeble cry, which seemed to come from the Hôtel de Poitiers, restored him to reason and to a realization of his situation. He threw himself on his bed to meditate on his course; soon he heard a slight rustling sound which came from the spiral staircase. He listened with all his ears, when the whispered words: "He is in bed," uttered by the old woman, came to his ear.

By an accident of which the architect was ignorant, the lightest sound on the stairway was echoed in the room of the apprentices, so the ostensible apprentice did not miss a single movement of the old miser and his sister, who were spying upon him. He undressed, got into bed, and pretended to sleep; during the time the couple remained on the stairs he was employed in devising means to escape his prison and his entry of the Hôtel de Poitiers.

About ten o'clock Cornélius and his sister, convinced that the new inmate was asleep, retired to their own rooms.

The young man paid careful attention to the sound they made in thus doing, and thought he could guess as to the rooms they each occupied; they must, he thought, occupy the whole of the second floor.

Like all the houses of that date, this floor was next below the roof, from which its dormer windows projected, which were adorned with tops of richly sculptured stone. The roof was bordered with a kind of balustrade, which concealed the gutters for the descent of the rain-water which gargoyles, like crocodiles' heads, discharged into the street. The youth, who had so carefully studied his bearings like as a cat might cunningly have done, believed he could make his way from the tower to the roof, thence to Mme. de Vallier's room by the waterspouts and gargoyles; but he had not counted on the narrowness of the windows in the turret; it was a manifest impossibility that he could pass through them. He now made up his mind to get upon the roof of the house through the window of the staircase on the second story. To accomplish this bold project he must have egress from his room—and Cornélius had carried off the key!

The young noble had taken the precaution of bringing with him, concealed under his clothes, one of those poniards used at that time for dealing the *coup-de-grâce* in a duel, when the vanquished adversary begged the victor to dispatch him. This horrible weapon had one edge sharpened like a razor, and the other one was toothed like a saw, but the teeth running in the reverse direction to that by which it would enter the body in the thrust. The youth purposed

to use this latter edge as a saw to cut the wood through around the lock. Happily for him the staple of the lock was attached to the outside of the door by four stout screws. By the help of his dagger he contrived, not without much difficulty, to unscrew and remove this altogether; he carefully laid aside the staple and the four screws, and proceeded down the stairs without his shoes to reconnoiter the locality. It was midnight when he was free.

He was quite astonished to discover a wide-open door to a corridor leading to several chambers, at the end of which passage was a window opening on to the V-shaped roof connecting the roofs of the Hôtel de Poitiers and the "evil house," which there met. Nothing could express his joy, unless it be the vow which he forthwith made to the Blessed Virgin to found a Mass in her honor at the noted parish church of the Escrignoles, at Tours.

After examining the vast, tall chimneys of the Hôtel de Poitiers, he retraced his steps to fetch his poniard; he saw, to his terror, a bright light upon the stairs, and Maître Cornélius himself in his dalmation, carrying a lamp, holding it out as far as possible, his eyes open to their fullest extent and fixed upon the corridor, at the entrance of which he stood still as a specter.

"If I open the window and jump out upon the roof, he will hear me," thought the young man.

But the terrible old man was coming on—coming like the hour of death upon the criminal. In this extremity Philippe, his wits quickened by love, recovered his presence of mind; he slipped into a doorway, squeezing himself into the angle of it, and awaited the old man's passing him. As soon as Cornélius, holding his lamp in advance, came into line with the current of air which the young man ejected from his lungs, the light was blown out.

Cornélius uttered a Dutch oath and muttered some vague phrases; but he turned around and retraced his footsteps. Then the noble hurriedly sought his room and the poniard, returned with the latter to his so blessed window, softly opened it, and sprang out upon the roof.

Once free and under the open sky, he felt weak, so deliri-

ously happy was he. The excitement of the danger, or the audacity of his enterprise, caused his emotion; victory is to the full as perilous as the battle. He leaned against the parapet, quivering in his satisfaction, and said to himself:

"By which of these chimneys, now, can I get into her room?"

He looked at them all. With the instinct of a lover, he touched each in turn to judge by the feel in which there had been a fire. When his mind was made up on this point, the daring young man securely stuck his poinard in the joint between two stones, attached to it a silken ladder, threw the latter down the chimney, and then, trusting to his good blade and the chance of having selected the route to his mistress's room, without a tremor descended. He knew not whether Saint-Vallier was asleep or awake; but one thing he did know, and that was that he would embrace the Countess, even if it should be at the price of two men's lives.

Presently his feet touched warm embers; he gently trod them; more gently yet he stooped down and saw the Countess seated in an armchair.

And she saw him.

By the light of the lamp, the timid being, pale and palpitating with pleasurable emotions, pointed to the Comte de Saint-Vallier lying in bed, about ten feet away from her. You may suppose that their burning, silent kisses echoed only in their hearts.

The next day, about nine in the morning, as Louis XI. was leaving his chapel after attending Mass, he found Maître Cornélius in his path.

"Good-luck, crony," said he, straightening his cap in his usual jerky manner.

"Sire, I would willingly pay you a thousand gold crowns if I could have a moment's speech with your majesty; I have discovered the thief who stole the rubies and all the jewels of the Duke——"

"Let us hear about this," said Louis XI., going into the courtyard of Le Plessis, followed by his silversmith, Coyctier his physician, Olivier le Daim, and the captain of the Scottish

Guard. "Tell me this business. Another man to hang for you! Halloo, Tristan!"

The grand provost, who was marching up and down the courtyard, came with slow steps, like a dog proud of his fidelity. The group paused under a tree. The King seated himself on a bench and the courtiers formed a circle around him.

"Sire, a man pretending to be a Fleming has entrapped and got the better of me——" began Cornélius.

"Indeed, then he must be crafty," said the King, wagging his head.

"Yes, truly," answered the silversmith. "But methinks he would have snared even yourself. How should I distrust a poor beggar recommended to me by Oosterlinck, a man for whom I hold a hundred thousand livres? Nay, I will wager that the Jew's letter and seal were forged! In short, Sire, I found myself this morning robbed of those jewels you praised so admiringly. They have been ravished from me, Sire! To steal the jewels of the Elector of Bavaria! The scoundrels will stop at nothing! They'll steal your kingdom if you don't look out. They respect no one!

"As soon as I missed the jewels I went up to the room of that apprentice, who is certainly a pastmaster in thievery. This time proof is not lacking. He had forced the lock of his door. The moon was down when he returned to his room, so he couldn't find all the screws. By good chance I trod upon one as I entered his room. He was sound asleep, the wretch, tired out. Just fancy, gentlemen, he climbed into my strong room by way of the chimney. To-morrow, or perhaps to-night, I'll make it hot for him though. We can always learn something from these villains. He had a silk ladder about him, and his clothes were marked with the dust of the roofs over which he had clambered, and the soot of the chimney down which he had descended. He intended remaining with me and robbing me night after night, the bold villain! But where has he hid the jewels? The countryfolk coming early into town saw him on the roof. He must have had accomplices, who waited for him on that dyke you made. Ah! Sire, you are the accomplice of fellows

who come in boats; when, crack! they carry off everything and leave never a trace! But we hold this fellow, this leader, as a key, the horrid miscreant, the daring scapegrace. Ah! but he'll be a dainty morsel for the gibbet; with a screw or two of *questioning* beforehand, he will tell all. And the honor of your reign is concerned in it—is it not? There ought not to be robbers in the realm of so great a King."

But for long the King had ceased to listen. He had fallen into one of those gloomy meditations which became so frequent and ominous in the latter period of his life. A deep silence reigned.

"This is your business," said he at length to Tristan. "Search ye it out."

He rose, walked a few steps, and the courtiers left him alone. He then perceived Cornélius, who, mounted on his mule, was riding away in the company of the grand provost.

"And the thousand gold crowns?" shouted the King after him.

"Ah! Sire, you are too great a King! No sum can pay for your justice!"

Louis XI. smiled. The courtiers envied the old Fleming his bold speech and privileges, as he passed off at a good pace down the avenue of young mulberry trees leading from Tours to Le Plessis.

Exhausted with fatigue, the young seigneur was sleeping soundly. When he returned from his gallant adventure the spirit which had carried him through ceased to act in giving him the ability to defend himself against distant or imaginary dangers; he was no longer rashly pursuing anticipated joys. He postponed until the morrow the cleansing of his soiled garb; a great blunder, to which all else conspired. It is true that the moon had failed him; through this he was unable to find all the screws belonging to the cursed lock, he was impatient. Then with the happy-go-lucky indifference of a tired man he trusted to chance which had served him so well. He did, indeed, make a bargain with himself to awake at the dawn, but the events of the day and the tumults of the night prevented his keeping the promise. Happiness is forgetful. Cornélius was no longer, so it seemed, formidable to him, as

he flung himself down on the truckle-bed where so many poor wretches had awoke to their doom. This recklessness was his ruin.

While the King's silversmith was returning from Le Plessis, in the company of the grand provost and his redoubtable bowmen, the pretended Goulenoire was being watched by the old sister, who was seated on the spiral stairs, knitting stockings and paying no heed to the cold.

The young man continued to dream of the ravishing enchantments of the charming night, in full ignorance of that danger which was rushing upon him at a hand-gallop. He saw himself on a cushion at the feet of the Countess, his head on her knees warm with affection's fire.

He was dreaming.

He listened to the story of her persecutions and the full details of the Count's petty tyranny; he wept over the lot of the unhappy lady, who was, in truth, the one natural daughter of Louis XI., who was best beloved by him. He promised her that to-morrow he would go to the King and reveal her wrongs to that terrible father; everything, he assured her, should be satisfactorily arranged as she might wish, the marriage annulled, the husband banished—while they themselves might be the victims of his sword, so perilously near, if the slightest noise should awaken him. But in his dreams, the gleam of the lamp, the flame of their eyes, the colors of the stuffs and draperies were more vivid, brighter than in reality; a more delightful perfume exhaled from their night-dresses; there was more of love on the air, more fire in the atmosphere than there had really been. The Marie of his dream did not so strongly resist his advances as the living Marie had done. The adoring glances, those tender entreaties, those adroit silences, those voluptuous solicitations, the affected generosity, which render the first moments of a passion so fiercely ardent, which arouse a fresh delirium at each new step toward love, were less objected to.

In obedience to the amorous jurisprudence of the period, Marie de Saint-Vallier granted her lover all the superficial privileges of the tender passion, *la petite oie*.[1] She will-

[1] Lit.: the little goose.

ingly allowed him to kiss her feet, her robe, her hands, her throat; she avowed her love; she accepted his vows and attentions; she consented for him to die for her; she yielded to an intoxication which the rigor of her half-chasteness intensified; further than that she could not be induced to go —she made her deliverance the guerdon of the highest surrender to his love.

In order to have a marriage annulled, in those days, it was necessary to apply to Rome; to obtain the help of certain cardinals, and to personally appear before the sovereign pontiff armed with the approval of the King. Marie was firm in desiring to be free to love, that she might freely give it to the one she loved.

Almost every woman in those days had enough of power to establish her empire in the heart of a man in such manner as to make that passion the history of his life, the principle of his noblest resolves. Women were then a power in France, they were sovereigns; they had noble pride; their lovers far more belonged to them than they to their lovers; their love was often the cause of bloodshed, but this must be faced to become a lover. But this Marie of his dream was gracious; she was deeply moved by her lover's devotion; she made but small defense against his vehement onslaught.

Which one was true? Did the false apprentice see the real woman in his dream? Was the lady he saw in the Hôtel de Poitiers only assuming virtue's mask? This question it is difficult to decide; it is too delicate; woman's honor demands, as it were, that it should remain unanswered.

At the instant that the Marie of the dream may have been about to forget her high dignity as his mistress, the lover found himself in the grasp of an iron hand, and the sharp tones of the grand provost, as he thus addressed him—

"Come, you Christian of midnight, who feel around the roofs for God, wake up, come!"

The young man saw the black face of Tristan d'Hermite above him; he recognized his sardonic leer; then on the steps of the corkscrew stairway he saw Cornélius and his sister, while beyond them were the provost guards. At that sight and noticing the diabolical visages, expressive of either

hatred or curiosity of persons accustomed to hanging people, the whilom Philippe Goulenoire sat up on his bed and rubbed his eyes.

"'Sdeath!" he exclaimed, seizing the poniard which was under his pillow. "Now is the time for our knives to play."

"Ho, ho!" cried Tristan, "that's the speech of a noble. It seemeth me that here is Georges d'Estouteville, nephew of the grandmaster of bowmen."

Hearing his real name uttered by Tristan, young d'Estouteville thought less of himself than of the danger his recognition would cause his unhappy mistress. To avert suspicion he cried out:

"By Mahomet's belly! help, help, comrades, help!"

After this terrible outcry, and made really in despair, the young courtier gave a bound, poniard in hand, and reached the landing on the stairs. But the myrmidons of the grand provost were well up in such games. As Georges d'Estouteville reached the stairs they most dexterously seized him, not at all alarmed at the vigorous lunges he made at them with his dagger, which, fortunately for the man at whom it was aimed, slipped on his corselet. He was disarmed, his arms tied, and he was thrown on the bed before the provost, who stood motionless, thinking.

Tristan looked for a moment, without speaking, at the prisoner's hands; he scratched his chin and pointed Cornélius to them, and said:

"Those are no vagabond's hands, neither are they those of an apprentice. He is a noble."

"Say a thief, rather!" retorted the Fleming. "My good Tristan, whether noble or serf, he has undone me, the villain. I would that this moment I could see his feet warming in your pretty boots. Beyond any doubt he is the chief of that gang of invisible devils who know all my secrets, open my locks, rob me, kill me by inches. They are rich with my wealth, Tristan. Ah! this time, though, we will recover the treasure, for this fellow has the face of the King of Egypt. I shall recover my so precious rubies, all the sums I have lost; our good King shall have his division of the spoil."

"Oh, our hiding-places are more secret than yours," said Georges, smiling.

"Ah, the damned villain, he confesses!" cried the miser.

The provost during this time had been carefully examining Georges's clothing and the lock of the door.

"How did you remove those screws?" asked Tristan.

Georges kept silent.

"Oh, all right; hold your tongue if you wish. You will soon confess to Saint Rackbones," said the provost.

"Now you talk business!" cried Cornélius.

"Away with him," said the grand provost.

Georges d'Estouteville asked permission to dress himself. On a sign from their chief the guard put on his clothing with the deft rapidity of a nurse who is changing a baby's dress during a moment's quietude.

An immense throng had assembled in the Rue du Mûrier. The growling increased with every moment, and had the sound of an incipient riot. Rumors of the theft had been prevalent since early morning. On all sides popular favor was aroused on behalf of the apprentice, who was said to be young and handsome; while the hatred against Cornélius had revived afresh. There was not a young woman with fresh cheeks and pretty feet to exhibit, nor a mother's son in all the town, but was determined on seeing the victim. When Georges issued from the house there was a frightful uproar in the street, as he was seen led by one of the guard, who, after he had mounted his horse, kept the twisted end of the strong leathern thong that bound his prisoner's arms.

Whether it was that the mob merely wished to see this new victim, or whether rescue was intended, the people behind pushed those in front close upon the little squad of cavalry posted outside the Malemaison. At this time, Cornélius and his sister slammed the door and banged the shutters to with the violence of panic-terror. Tristan was not accustomed to respect the populace, as in those days they were not yet the "sovereign people," and cared but little for a probable riot.

"Push on! Push on!" he cried to his men.

At his voice the bowmen spurred their horses toward the end of the street. The crowd seeing a few persons knocked

down and trampled by the horses, and others crushed up against the walls of the houses and nearly suffocated, took the wise course of returning to their homes.

"Make way for the King's justice!" cried Tristan. "What are you doing here? Do some of you want hanging, too? Go home, good people; your dinner is being burned. Here, my good dame, your husband's hose need mending; get off home and darn them, get back to your needles."

Though this jocular speech showed that the grand provost was in a good humor, the most obstreperous fled before him as if he were the Black Plague itself.

At the time the crowd began to give somewhat, Georges d'Estouteville was astounded to see at one of the windows of the Hôtel de Poitiers his beloved Marie de Saint-Vallier, laughing with the Count. She was mocking at *him*, the poor devoted lover, who was going to his death for her. But, perhaps, she was only amused by seeing the caps of the populace knocked off by the spears of the bowmen.

One must be twenty-three years old, rich in illusions, fully able to believe in a woman's love, must love with all the power of our life, risking it with pleasure on the handsel of a kiss, and then be betrayed to comprehend the fury of hatred and despair which shook Georges d'Estouteville's heart at the sight of his laughing mistress, who only vouchsafed him a cold, indifferent glance. Without a doubt she had been there some time, for her arms rested on a cushion; she was quite at her ease and her old mountebank seemed content. He, too, was laughing—all curses on the hunchback!

A few tears ran from the young man's eyes; but when Marie saw them she hastily drew back. The tears, though, were suddenly dried when Georges beheld the red and white plumes of the page who was in his interest. The Count did not notice the movements of this cautious page, for he advanced to his mistress on tiptoe. After he had spoken a few words in her ear, Marie returned to the window. She managed to elude the watchful eye of her tyrant for a moment and cast upon Georges a look that was bright with the fires of love—and the triumph of having so skillfully deceived her Argus—a glance that seemed to say:

"I am watching over you."

Had she cried aloud these words to him, she could not more have impressed them upon his hearing; that glance was full of a thousand thoughts, it was charged with the terrors, hopes, pleasure, of their situation. He had passed in that one second from heaven to martyrdom, from martyrdom back to heaven! So, then, this brave young man, light-hearted and content, walked gayly to his doom; he adjudged the horrors of the grim "question" but a small price for the rapture of his love.

As Tristan was turning off the Rue du Mûrier, his men halted as an officer of the Scottish Guard rode toward them at full tilt.

"What is to do?" asked the provost.

"Naught concerning you," replied the officer, scornfully. "The King sends me to summon the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, whom he bids dine with him."

The grand provost had barely reached the quay of Le Plessis when the Count and Countess, both riding, he on his horse, she on a white mule, and followed by their pages, joined the bowmen, intending to enter Plessis-le-Tours in their company. All were moving slowly. Georges was on foot between two mounted guards, one of whom still held him by the leathern thong.

Tristan, the Count, and his wife naturally led the van; the criminal followed them. The young page mingled with the bowmen and questioned them, at times addressing the prisoner; he contrived with some cunning to say to him in a low voice:

"I got over the garden-wall of Le Plessis and took a missive to the King from madame. She was nearly dying when she learned of your arrest for theft. Be of good courage. She now goes to the King to speak for you."

Already had love given wiliness and courage to the Countess. The laughter she had forced was part of the heroism women can display in the great crises of life.

Despite the singular fancy which possessed the author of *Quentin Durward* to place the royal château of Plessis-le-Tours on an eminence, we must content ourselves in leaving

it where it really was situated, that is, on the low land, protected on either side by the Cher and the Loire; also by the Canal Sainte-Anne, so named in honor of his well-loved daughter, Mme. du Beaujeu. By uniting the two rivers between Tours and Le Plessis, this canal served as a formidable further protection to the castle, and was also valuable as a highway for commerce. On that side toward Bréhémont, a broad, fertile plain, the park was inclosed by a moat, the remains of which still show its extent and depth.

At a period when the power of artillery was still in embryo, the position of Le Plessis, long the favorite retreat of Louis XI., might be considered impregnable. The château, built of brick and stone, was in no way remarkable; but surrounding it were noble trees, and from its windows could be seen through the well-arranged vistas [1] the loveliest views imaginable. No rival place was to be found near this solitary castle, which stood in the very center of the little plain reserved for the King and guarded by four streams of water.

If tradition may be relied upon, Louis XI. occupied the west wing, and from his chamber could see at one glance the course of the Loire, the pretty valley watered by the Croisville, and some part of the slopes of Saint-Cyr. From the windows opening on the courtyard he could see the entrance to his fortress and the dyke by which he had connected his favorite residence with the city of Tours. The suspicious disposition of the King gives much weight to this tradition. It is certain that had Louis XI. bestowed upon the building of his castle the luxury of architecture which François I. afterward displayed at Chambord, the royal residence of France would always have remained in Touraine. This lovely spot and exquisite scenery need only to be seen to at once establish its superiority over all other royal residences in the fair realm of France.

Louis XI., now in his fifty-seventh year, had scarcely more than three years of life before him; already he began to feel death's approach by many attacks of that illness which was to prove mortal; delivered from his enemies; on the point of adding to his territories by absorbing the possessions of the

[1] *Plexitium.*

duchy of Burgundy, through the marriage of the Dauphin and Marguerite, the sole heiress of that dukedom—which marriage was arranged by Desquerdes, the captain-general of his army in Flanders; having established his authority throughout his realm; now meditating ameliorations and improvements of every description in the kingdom, he found time slipping from his grasp, no troubles remaining to him save those of old age. Deceived by everyone, even by the minions nearest him, experience had increased his natural distrust. The desire to live had become in him the egotism of a king who has become incarnate in his subjects; he craved long life in which to carry out vast designs.

Everything that the common sense of statesmen of spirit or the genius of revolution has since introduced of change in the monarchy, Louis XI. had devised. Equality of taxation, and of people before the law—the Sovereign being then the Law—were the objects for which he endeavored. On the eve of All-Saints' he had gathered together the learned goldsmiths of France for the purpose of establishing in his kingdom a system of uniform weights and measures. He had already established a uniform power. Thus his great spirit soared like an eagle above his realm, joining, singular but true, the prudence of a king to the idiosyncrasies of a man of genius.

At no period of our history has Monarchy's figure been greater or more majestic. Amazing contrast! A great mind in a frail body; an unbelieving spirit as concerned the mundane, a devout believer in all the practices of religion; a man struggling against two powers greater than his own—the present, the future; the future in which he dreaded eternal torment, a fear causing him to sacrifice largely to the Church; the present, his own life, for the saving of which he was the slave of Coyctier. This King, who could crush all about him, was himself crushed by remorse, by disease, in the midst of that mysterious poem—the combat of Man in his highest manifestations of power tilting against nature.

It was stupendous, it was impressive.

While awaiting his dinner, which, in those days, was partaken between eleven o'clock and noon, Louis XI., after a

short walk, sat down in a large, tapestried chair near the fire in his private chamber. Olivier le Daim and Coyctier, the leech, looked at each other without a word, standing in a window recess and watching their master, who was sleeping. The only sound to be heard was the steps of the two chamberlains as they paced back and forth in the anteroom, the Sire de Montrésor and Jean Dufou, Sire de Montbazon. These two seigneurs of Touraine kept an eye on the captain of the Scottish Guard, who, according to his usual custom, was sleeping in his chair.

The King seemed to be dozing. His head drooped upon his breast; his cap, pulled forward over his forehead, hid his eyes. Thus, seated on his high chair of State, which was surmounted by a crown, he seemed, huddled up as he was, like a man who had fallen asleep while engaged in some profound meditation.

At this moment Tristan and his followers crossed the bridge of Sainte-Anne over the canal, about two hundred feet from the entrance to Le Plessis.

"Who goes there?" asked the King.

The courtiers, in surprise, looked at each other inquiringly.

"He is dreaming," said Coyctier in a low voice.

"*Pasques-Dieu!*" cried Louis XI. "Do you think I'm a fool? People are now crossing the bridge. To be sure I am sitting near the chimney, and I may hear more clearly than you. This effect of nature might be made useful," he thoughtfully added.

"What a man!" said le Daim.

Louis XI. arose and walked toward one of the windows looking over the town. He saw the grand provost and exclaimed:

"Ha, ha! here come my old crony and his thief. And there, too, is my little Marie de Saint-Vallier; I had forgotten all about that. Olivier," he continued to the barber, "go at once and tell M. de Montbazon to serve us some good Bourgueil wine at dinner, and mind the cook forgets not the lampreys. Mme. la Comtesse likes those of all things. May I eat lampreys?" he added after a pause, glaring uneasily at Coyctier.

For all answer the physician commenced to examine his master's face. The two men were a picture.

Historians and romanticists have consecrated the brown camlet large coat, with breeches of the same material, worn by Louis XI. His cap, decorated with pewter medallions, his collar of the order of Saint Michael are not less known; but no writer, no painter, has ever depicted the visage of that terrible monarch in his last years; sickly, hollow, yellow, brown, every feature of which was expressive of sour cunning and cold sarcasm. This mask had the brow of a noble man, a forehead furrowed with wrinkles, weighty with deep thoughts; but on his lips and cheeks was a something indescribably low and vulgar. Looking at certain details of that countenance you might have thought him a debauched vine-grower or a miserly tradesman; but then, above these resemblances and the decrepitude of a dying old man, could vaguely be seen the King, the man of power, the man of action, arising supreme. His pale yellow eyes seemed extinct of sight; but a spark of courage and wrath lurked within; at the slightest friction it could burst into flame and cast about consuming fires.

The physician was a stout burgher with a florid face, dressed in black, peremptory, greedy of gain, of much self-importance.

These two personages were framed, so to say, in that paneled chamber of walnut-wood, hung about with tapestry of Flanders; the ceiling was of carved beams and dingy with smoke.

The furniture, the bed, all inlaid with arabesques of polished pewter, would to-day seem more valuable than they were at that time when the arts were just exploiting their numberless masterpieces.

"Lampreys are not good for you," replied the physician.

(This title, *le physicien*, but recently substituted for the former term *maître myrrhe*, is still applied to the faculty in England. The name was at that time almost universally used in France.)

"What then may I eat?" asked the King humbly.

"Widgeon in salt. Otherwise, you have so much bile moving that you might die on All-Souls' Day."

"To-day!" cried the King, terrified.

"Be composed, Sire," answered Coyctier. "Do not fret your mind; try and amuse yourself some."

"Ah!" said the King, "my daughter Marie used to succeed in that difficult business."

As he spoke, Imbert de Basternay, Sire de Montrésor, and de Bridoré, softly knocked on the royal door. By the King's permission he entered and announced the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. Louis nodded a sign. Marie appeared, followed by her aged husband, who had to allow her to precede him.

"Good-day, my children," said the King.

"Sire," replied the lady in a whisper, as she embraced him, "I would speak secretly with you."

Louis made as though he had not heard her.

"Dufou, holà!" he cried in a hollow voice, turning to the door.

Dufou, Lord of Montbazon, grand cupbearer of France, entered in haste.

"Go to the steward; tell him I must have widgeon salted for dinner. Then to Mme. de Beaujeu, inform her that I dine alone to-day. Do you know, madame," continued the King, pretending to some feeling, "that you neglect me. It is nearly three years since I saw you. Come, come hither, pretty one," he added, sitting down and holding out his arms to her. "How thin you have become! Why have you allowed her to get so thin? Eh?" he ejaculated, turning to the Count de Poitiers.

The jealous husband cast so frightened a look at his wife that she almost pitied him.

"It's happiness, Sire," replied he.

"Ah! you love each other too much, do you?" said the King, holding his daughter between his knees. "I was right in calling you Marie-pleine-de-Grace. Coyctier, leave us! Now, what do you want of me?" he asked his daughter, as soon as he saw the physician was gone. "After sending me your——"

In this so great danger Marie audaciously placed her hand on the King's lips and whispered in his ear:

"I always thought you cautious and quick-witted——"

"Saint-Vallier," said the King, laughing, "I think Bridoré has something he wishes to say to you."

The Count left the room; but he made a gesture with his shoulder, well known to his wife, who could guess the thoughts of this jealous man, and realized that she must guard against his malignancy.

"Tell me, child, how you think I am looking? Have I changed much, eh?"

"Do you want the truth, my lord? Or must I only speak you fair?"

"No," said he in a husky tone of voice, "I want to know where I am."

"In that case you look but poorly to-day. I trust, though, that my veracity mars not my cause's success."

"What is your cause?" asked the King, frowning and passing one hand over his forehead.

"Ah! Sire," she replied, "the young man that you have had arrested in the house of your silversmith, Maître Cornélius, and who is now a prisoner to the grand provost, is innocent of theft."

"How know you this?" asked the King.

Marie hung her head and blushed.

"I need not ask if there is love at the bottom of this business," said the King gently, and stroking his chin, while he raised his daughter's face. "If you do not confess every morning, child, you will go to hell."

"Cannot you oblige me without questioning my secret thoughts?"

"Where were the pleasure in that?" exclaimed the King, seeing a chance of some amusement in this affair.

"Ah! but would you have pleasure at the cost of my sorrow?"

"Oh! you sly puss, you; won't you give me your confidence, then?"

"So, then, my lord, set that young noble free."

"Oh, oh! he is a nobleman, is he?" cried the King. "Then he is not an apprentice?"

"He is certainly innocent," said she.

"I do not so see it," replied the King coldly. "I am the supreme judge in my kingdom; it is my duty to punish malefactors."

"Come, put not on that solemn face of yours! Grant to me the life of that young man."

"Would not that be giving back your own?"

"Sire," said she, "I am pure and virtuous. You do but jest——"

"Then," said Louis XI., interrupting her, "if you cannot show me my way, I must get the light of Tristan upon it."

Marie de Sassenage turned pale; she made a violent effort; she said:

"Sire, let me assure you that should you do this, you will afterward regret it. The so-called thief has stolen nothing. If you will but grant me his pardon, I will tell you all, even though you should visit it on me."

"Oh, ho! this is becoming serious," exclaimed the King, as he pushed up his cap. "Speak, child."

"Well," said she in a low voice in her father's ear, "he was in my room all night."

"He may have been there and yet robbed Cornélius; a double larceny."

"Sire, I have your blood in my veins—I was not born to love a scoundrel. That young noble is the nephew of the captain-general of your bowmen."

"Well, well!" cried the King, "you are hard to confess."

At these words the King pushed his daughter off his knee, hurried to the door of the room, but softly and on tiptoe, making no sound. A moment ago the light from the window in the outer room, shining in the space beneath the door, had traced the shadow of a listener's foot projected slightly on the floor of his room. He abruptly opened the iron-bound door and surprised the Comte de Saint-Vallier eavesdropping.

"*Pasques-Dieu!*" he exclaimed, "such insolence deserves the ax."

"My liege," said Saint-Vallier boldly, "I would rather the ax were at my neck than that the ornament of the married were on my head."

"You may yet have both," said Louis XI. "Not a man of the lot of you is safe from such a misfortune, my lords, all. Go into the outer hall. Conyngham," continued the King, addressing the Scottish captain, "you were asleep, eh? Where, then, is M. de Bridoré? Why do you thus allow me to be invaded? *Pasques-Dieu*, the meanest burgher in Tours is better served than his King."

After venting his anger Louis re-entered the room; but he was careful to draw the tapestry curtains, which formed a second door, intended less for the stoppage of the whistling, harsh winds than for the stifling of the King's words.

"So, my daughter," said he, amusing himself with teasing her as a cat does with a mouse, "Georges d'Estouteville was your lover last night?"

"Oh, no, Sire!"

"No? Ah! by Saint-Carpion! he deserves death. Did the villain then not think my daughter fair enough?"

"Oh! that's not the way of it," said she. "He kissed my feet and hands with such ardor as might have melted the most virtuous wife. He loves me truly and in all honor," she added.

"Then do you mistake me for Saint-Louis, that I should believe such nonsense? A young fellow made like he is, to risk his life just to kiss your little slippers or your sleeve? Tell that to someone else?"

"But aye, my lord, it is true! Still he came for another reason."

Having uttered these words, Marie felt that she had endangered her husband's life, for Louis eagerly asked:

"For what?"

The adventure amused him much. He certainly did not anticipate the strange confidences his daughter now made him after she had stipulated for her husband's pardon.

"Oh, ho! M. de Saint-Vallier. So you would even dare to shed the royal blood!" cried the King, his eyes blazing with fury.

At this moment the bell of Le Plessis rang the hour of dinner and the escort of the King to arms. Leaning on his daughter's arm, Louis XI. appeared with lowering brow on the threshold of his Chamber, and there found his guard in attendance. He glanced ambiguously at the Comte de Saint-Vallier, as he was thinking up the sentence he meant to pronounce on him.

The deep silence which reigned was presently broken by Tristan's footsteps as he ascended the grand stairway. The grand provost entered the hall, and, advancing toward the King, said:

"Sire, the affair is settled."

"What, is it all over?" said the King.

"Our man is in the hands of the monks. He confessed the theft after a screw of the 'question.'"

The Countess sighed and turned pale; she was unable to utter a word, she could only gaze at the King. That look was observed by Saint-Vallier, who muttered in an undertone:

"I am betrayed! The thief is acquainted with my wife."

"Silence!" commanded the King. "Someone there is here who tires my patience. At once, and stop the execution," he added, addressing the grand provost. "Your own body will answer for that of the criminal, my too prompt friend! This affair must be thoroughly sifted, I purpose the doing of it myself. Set the prisoner at large provisionally; I can always recover him; these robbers have hiding-places that they love, lairs where they lurk. Let it be made known to Cornélius that to-night I go to his house to conduct the inquiry. M. de Saint-Vallier," said the King, fixing his eyes on the Count, "I know of your doings. All the blood in your body could not pay for one drop of mine; dost understand? By our Lady of Cléry! You have committed *lèse-majesté*. Did I give you so sweet a wife that you should make her pale and haggard? To your house at once, there make ready preparations for a long journey."

The mere habit of cruelty made the King pause at these words; then he added:

"To-night you set forth to Venice to attend to my business

with that government. You need have no anxiety about your wife; she will abide with me at Le Plessis; she certainly should be safe here. From this on I shall watch over her with greater care than I have done since I married her to you."

When she heard these words, Marie silently pressed her father's arm as though thanking him for his clemency and good grace. As for Louis XI., he was laughing in his sleeve.

Louis XI. was particularly fond of interfering in the domestic concerns of his subjects, and he was ever ready to mingle his royal majesty in bourgeois life. This taste, sincerely blamed by some historians, was really but a passion for the *incognito*, one of the greatest relaxations of princes—a kind of temporary abdication, enabling them to put a dash of spice into their existence which becomes insipid for the lack of opposition. Louis XI., however, played his *incognito* without disguise. On such occasions he was always the "good-fellow," endeavoring to please the middle-class whom he thus made his allies against grim feudality. It was some time now since he had found an opportunity of "making himself popular," or taking up the defense of some person *engarrié*, an old term still surviving in Tours and meaning petty litigation, so that he vehemently entered into the secret sorrows of Maître Cornélius, as also into his anxieties.

Several times during dinner he said to his daughter:

"Who, think you, can have robbed my old crony? His losses from theft now amount to over twelve hundred thousand crowns' worth of jewels, this in eight years. Twelve hundred thousand crowns, my lords!" he went on, looking round at the gentlemen-in-waiting. "By our lady! with such a sum a great many absolutions may be bought at Rome. *Pasques-Dieu*, with such a sum of money I could have built the bank along the Loire, or, still better, have conquered Piedmont; a fine buffer all ready constructed for our kingdom."

When dinner was ended, Louis XI. led away his daughter, the physician, and the grand provost, with an escort of men-

at-arms, to the Hôtel de Poitiers, where he found, as he expected, the Comte de Saint-Vallier awaiting his wife, most likely to make away with her.

"Monsieur," said the King, "my instructions were for your immediate departure. Bid farewell to your wife, and at once proceed to the frontier; you will be accompanied by an escort of honor. As to your instructions and credentials, they will be in Venice before yourself."

Louis issued his orders, not forgetting to add certain secret instructions to a lieutenant of the Scottish Guard, to take a squad of men and attend the King's envoy to Venice. Saint-Vallier departed in haste, after giving a cold kiss to his wife, which he would have been pleased had it been fatal to her.

When the Countess had retired to her chamber, Louis XI. crossed over to the Malemaison, eager to begin the unraveling of the dismal farce, lasting, as it had done, for eight years, in the house of his silversmith. He flattered himself that being the King he could exercise enough penetration to discover the mystery of the robberies. Cornélius did not look upon the advent of this numerous retinue without forebodings of woe.

"And are all these people to take part in the inquiry?" he asked the King.

Louis could not refrain from smiling at the evident fright of the old miser and his sister.

"No, crony," said he; "don't worry yourself, they will sup with us at Le Plessis; you and I will alone go into the matter. I am so excellent an investigator that I will wager ten thousand crowns with you that I can find the criminal."

"Never mind the wager, Sire; just find him."

They went at once into the strong-room in which the Fleming kept his treasures. There King Louis, who first asked to see the casket whence the Duke of Burgundy's jewels had been abstracted, and then the chimney down which the robber was supposed to have come, easily proved to the silversmith the falseness of the latter supposition, inasmuch as there was no sign of soot upon the hearth—where, of a truth, a fire was but seldom kindled—and no trace of any-

thing having descended the flue. Moreover, that the chimney issued at a portion of the roof that was practically inaccessible.

After two hours of close investigation, marked with that sagacity which distinguished the suspicious nature of Louis XI., it was proved to a demonstration that no one had forced an entrance into the treasury. No marks of violence showed upon the locks, inside or out, nor on the iron coffers used to contain the gold, silver, and jewels hypothecated by wealthy debtors.

"If the thief opened this box," said the King, "why did he take nothing more than the Bavarian jewels? What reason had he for leaving this pearl necklace lying beside them? A queer robber!"

At this remark the wretched miser turned deathly pale; the King and he eyed each other for a moment.

"Then, my liege, for what did that robber come here whom you have taken under your protection? And, also, why was he prowling around at night?"

"If you have not guessed oh! my crony, I command you to remain in ignorance. That is a secret of my own."

"Then I am haunted of the devil!" cried the usurer lamentably.

Under any other circumstances the King would have laughed at his silversmith's cry; but in place of this he was studious and thoughtful; he was now casting on the Fleming a scrutiny peculiar to men of genius and force, penetrating to the brain. Cornélius was alarmed; he thought he must have, in some way, offended his dangerous master.

"Be it devil or angel, I'll have him, the criminal," the King abruptly exclaimed. "Should you be robbed to-night, to-morrow I will know who did it. Summon that old hag, your sister," he added.

Cornélius slightly hesitated at leaving the King alone in his treasure chamber; but the stern smile that curled Louis's withered lips compelled him. He, nevertheless, hastened to return, followed by the old woman.

"Have you any flour?" demanded the King.

"Oh, yes; we have laid in our winter supply," she answered.

"Well, go and fetch some," said the King.

"What, then, would you be doing with our flour, Sire?" she exclaimed in alarm, and not impressed in the least by the King's august majesty.

"Old fool! do you as our gracious liege commands," cried Cornélius. "And shall the King lack flour?"

"My good flour!" grumbled she, as she descended the stairs. "Is this what I buy fine flour for?"

Then she returned and said to the King:

"Is it, Sire, only a royal fancy to examine my flour?"

Finally she reappeared, this time carrying one of those coarse flax-sacks, which from time immemorial have been used in Touraine to fetch and carry provisions to and from the market—nuts, fruit, or grain. The bag was half full of flour. The housewife opened it and showed it to the King, casting a viperous, venomous glance with which old maids, as one may say, seem to squirt venom on a man.

"It costs six sous the *septerée* or measure," said she.

"What, then, does that matter?" said the King. "Spread it upon the floor, but do it carefully so that it may be evenly strewn—as if it had been a light fall of snow."

But the old maid comprehended him not. This order dismayed her more than though the end of the world had come.

"My flour, Sire!—on the ground! But—why——"

Maître Cornélius was vaguely beginning to understand the intent of the King's doings. He grasped the sack and gently spread its contents on the floor. The old woman shuddered, but she extended her hand for the empty bag, and when it was given her by her brother disappeared step by step with a profound sigh.

Cornélius took a feather-duster and carefully smoothed over the flour till it lay like a sheet of snow; as he did this he stepped backward, the King before him, who seemed much amused over the proceedings. When they reached the door Louis XI. said to Cornélius:

"Are there two keys to the lock?"

"No, Sire."

The King carefully examined the structure of the door, which was heavy and strengthened with plates of iron and strong bars of the same, all of which latter converged to a secret lock, the key of which Cornélius only possessed.

After scrutinizing everything thoroughly the King sent for Tristan; him he ordered to set a watch at night with the greatest circumspection and secrecy in the mulberry trees on the embankment and on the roofs of the adjoining houses; first, though, to assemble at once the rest of his command and escort him back to Le Plessis, so that it might appear that the King did not stay to sup with Cornélius. Then he told the miser to close his windows with extreme care, so that not a single ray of light might escape through them, and to give orders that he be served with a light repast to continue the deception. Then the King departed in much pomp for Le Plessis by way of the embankment, and privately returned with only two of his suite to the house of the *torçonnier*. These precautions were so well taken and carried out that the good folk of Tours and the courtiers really believed that the King had returned to Le Plessis, and that he was to sup on the morrow with Maître Cornélius. The miser's sister still further confirmed this by buying some green-sauce from the best maker, who had a store near the *quarroir aux herbes*, afterward known as the *carroir de Beaune*, in honor of a splendid white marble fountain which was sent from Italy as an ornamentation for the capital of his province by Jacques de Beaune.

About eight o'clock that evening, as the King was supping with his physician, Cornélius, and the captain of the Scottish Guard, conversing jollily and forgetting for the nonce that he was Louis XI., ill and in danger of death, profound silence was without, and all passers, even the cleverest thief, might have taken it that the house was uninhabited by any but its usual inmates.

"I hope," said the King, laughing, "that my chum the silversmith may this night be robbed, so shall my curiosity be satisfied. See to it, my lords, that no one leaves his chamber

to-morrow morning without my order under pain of condign punishment."

Thereupon all went to bed.

The next morning Louis XI. was the first to leave his chamber, and he at once proceeded to the door of the treasury. He was more than astonished to see, as he went along, the imprint of a large foot along the stairway and corridors of the house. He carefully avoided these so precious foot-marks, but traced them to the door of the miser's closet; this he found locked and without any sign of violence or fracture. He examined the direction of the steps, but they became gradually fainter and ultimately left not the faintest trace; it was therefore impossible to discover whither the robber had escaped.

"Ha! crony," cried the King to Cornélius, "you have been robbed most excellently this time, for sure!"

At these words the old Fleming, terrified out of his senses, hurried out. Louis XI. made him look at the footprints on the pavements, and while again examining himself for the second time, the King by chance observed the old man's slippers and there recognized the shape of the sole of which so many copies were spread before him on the stairs. He said not a word and restrained his laughter, for he remembered the number of innocent men who had been hanged for this.

Cornélius now hurried to his treasures. When he was in the room the King caused him to make a new mark alongside those already there, and he soon proved to him that the thief of his treasure was none other than himself.

"The pearl necklace is missing! There is sorcery in this," cried Cornélius. "I never left my room."

"We'll soon learn as to that, now," said the King, the evident sincerity of the silversmith quite mystifying him.

He at once summoned the men of the watch and asked—

"Marry, now, what saw you during the night?"

"Ah, Sire!" said the lieutenant, "a most amazing sight! Your majesty's silversmith crept down by the side of the

wall like a cat; so lightly withal that he seemed but a specter."

"I?" exclaimed Cornélius; this one word he uttered, then remained silent, and stood stock-still and rigid like a man who has lost all use of his limbs.

"Begone now, all of you," said Louis, addressing the bowmen, "and tell Messieurs Conyngham, Coyctier, Bridoré, and also Tristan to leave their rooms and come here at once to mine. You have incurred the penalty of death," said he to Cornélius, who very happily did not hear him. "You have ten such on your soul!"

Thereupon the King grimly, but noiselessly, laughed, then paused. But as he remarked the strange pallor that overspread the old man's face, he said:

"Be not uneasy; you are more valuable to bleed than to kill. You may escape the fangs of *my* justice in consideration of a good round sum paid into my treasury by you; but, mark you, if you build not at least one chapel to the Virgin, you are more than like to find that things are made hot for you throughout all eternity."

"Twelve hundred and thirty and eighty-seven thousand crowns make thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns," replied Cornélius, absorbed in his calculations. "Thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns hidden —where?"

"He must have buried them in some hiding-place," muttered the King, who began to think the sum royally magnificent. "That was the lodestone that ever attracted him back to Tours. He smelt his gold."

At this moment entered Coyctier. Noticing the attitude of Maître Cornélius, he scrutinized him keenly, the while Louis XI. narrated the adventure.

"My liege," replied the physician, "there is naught of the supernatural in this. Your silversmith is a sleep-walker. This is the third case I have come across of this so singular malady. If you would amuse yourself by watching him at such times, you might see the old hulks stepping without danger on the verge of the parapet to the roof. In two other cases I have already studied, I could observe a curious

connection between the actions of the nocturnal existence and the interests and occupations of daily life in which they were engaged."

"Ah! Maître Coyctier, you are indeed most wise."

"Am I not, then, your physician?" he insolently retorted.

On hearing this reply, Louis XI. made a slight gesture habitual with him when a good idea struck him—he hastily shoved up his cap.

"At such times," continued Coyctier, "persons transact their business when asleep. As this friend of ours is fond of hoarding, he has simply carried out his darling hobby. He would most probably have an attack when, during the day, he has felt much alarm for the safety of his treasure."

"*Pasques-Dieu!* and such a treasure!" exclaimed the King.

"Where is it?" asked Cornélius, who, by a singularity of our nature, heard all the remarks of the King and his physician, while yet practically in a state of torpor, caused by thought and the shock of his misfortune.

"Ah!" cried Coyctier, with a diabolically coarse laugh, "somnambulists never have recollection of their acts when they awake."

"Leave us," said the King.

When Louis XI. was alone with Cornélius, he glanced at him and ejaculated a cold chuckle.

"Be it known, Worshipful Master Hoogworst," said he, bowing ironically low, "all treasure-trove in France is the property of the King."

"Yes, my liege, all is yours; you are the absolute master of our lives and fortunes; but thus far you have been merciful, and have only taken what you needed."

"Listen to me, old crony mine; if I assist you in recovering this lost treasure, you can surely, in all confidence and without fear, agree to divide it with me."

"No, Sire, I will not divide it; I will give it all to you at my death. But what scheme have you for finding it?"

"I myself will watch you when you take your nocturnal walks. You doubtless would fear to trust any but me."

"Ah! Sire," exclaimed Cornélius, flinging himself at the King's feet, "you are the only man in the kingdom whom I

would trust in such service; and I shall try to prove my gratitude for your goodness to your so humble servant, by doing my utmost to promote the marriage of the heiress of Burgundy with Monseigneur the Dauphin. She indeed would bring you a noble treasure, not of crown-pieces, to be sure, but of lands which would round off your dominions to their greater glory."

"Pshaw, Dutchman, you think to hoodwink me!" said the King, his brow growing threatening, "or you have hitherto played me false."

"Nay, Sire, can you then doubt my devotion—you the only man I love?"

"Words, words!" retorted the King, turning to face the miser, and looking him in the eye. "You ought not to have waited for this moment to be of use to me. You are selling me your influence—*Pasques-Dieu!* to me—Louis XI. Are you, then, the master? Am I the servant? I wish to know."

"Ah! Sire," said the old man, "I was but waiting to surprise you most agreeably with the news of arrangements I had made for you in Ghent; I was looking for confirmation of it from Oosterlinck through that apprentice. What has become of him?"

"Enough!" said the King. "This is but a blunder the more. I do not like that persons should interfere, uncalled for, in my affairs. Enough! leave me; I must think it all out."

Maître Cornélius found the agility of youth to fly to the lower rooms where he made sure of finding his sister.

"Ah! Jeanne, dear soul, we have a hoard hidden somewhere in this house; I have put away thirteen hundred thousand crowns in jewels somewhere. I—I—I am the thief."

Jeanne Hoogworst rose from her stool and stood erect as if the seat had been red-hot iron.

The shock was so violent for an old maid, accustomed as she was to reduce herself by voluntary privations and fasts, that she trembled in every limb; horrible pains seized her back. By degrees her paleness increased, and her face—the wrinkles of which made any change difficult to discover—

became quite distorted while her brother told her the malady to which he was a victim, and the perplexing situation in which he was placed.

"King Louis XI. and I," said he in conclusion, "have just been lying to each other like two miracle-mongers. You see, child, if he watches me, he will learn the secret place of my hidden treasure. Only the King may watch my nightly wanderings. I am not so sure that his conscience, near as he is to death, could withstand the temptation of thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns. We must be beforehand with him; *we* must find this nest and send the treasure to Ghent, and you alone——"

Cornélius stopped suddenly short; he seemed to be weighing the heart of his sovereign, who at twenty-two years of age had dreamed of parricide. When he had made up his mind about Louis XI., he rose abruptly like a man in haste to escape a pressing danger. At this moment his sister, too weak or too strong for such a crisis, fell stark; she was dead.

Maître Cornélius raised her and shook her with violence, saying:

"This is no time for dying. You will have time enough for that later on. Oh! it's all over. Old hag, she never could do the right thing at the right time."

He closed her eyes and laid her on the floor. But then the good and noble feelings which lay cumbered over in his heart came back to him, and, almost forgetting his hidden treasure, he pathetically cried:

"Ah! my poor companion, have I really lost you? You who understood me so well! Oh! you were my real treasure. There, there, lies my real treasure! With you goes my peace of mind, my affections—all are gone. If only you had known what good it would have done me for you to have lived two days longer, you would surely have remained alive, if only to please me, my poor sister. Ah! Jeanne! thirteen hundred thousand crowns! Won't that wake you? No, she is indeed dead!"

Thereupon he sat down and said no more; but two great tears welled in his eyes and rolled down his hollow cheeks; then, with many an ejaculation, he locked up the room and

returned to the King. Louis was startled by the expression of grief on the damp features of his old crony.

"What now?" he asked.

"Alas! Sire, misfortunes never come singly. My sister is dead. She's gone below before me," said he, pointing to the floor with a terrible gesture.

"Enough!" cried Louis XI., who disliked any mention of death.

"I make you my heir. I have now nothing for which I care. Here are my keys. Hang me, if such be your good pleasure. Take all; ransack the house; it is full of gold. I give it all up to you——"

"Come, come, old friend," said the King, half moved by the sight of this strange grief, "we shall yet find your treasure some of these fine nights; the sight of such riches will give you a further heart to live. I will come again in the course of the week."

"When it pleaseth you, my liege."

At this answer the King, who had made a few steps toward the door, turned sharply around, and the two men looked at each other with an expression that pen or pencil would vainly try to reproduce.

"Adieu, my crony!" said Louis XI. at last, in a curt voice, pushing up his cap.

"May God and the Virgin keep you in their good graces!" replied the usurer humbly, as he conducted the King to the door.

After so long a friendship the two men found a barrier raised between them, erected of suspicion and gold; though they had always been as one man on matters of suspicion and gold. But then they knew each other so well, they had so completely the habit, as one might say, of intimacy, that the King could divine from the tone of expression in his voice as he said: "When it pleaseth you, my liege," the repugnance he would henceforth feel when he visited the silversmith, just as the latter recognized a declaration of war in the manner of the King's saying: "Adieu, my crony!"

Thus Louis XI. and his treasurer parted in much doubt as to what their future conduct would be to each other. The

monarch, for a truth, knew the secret of the Fleming; but he, on his part, could, by means of his connections, bring about one of the greatest acquisitions that any King of France had ever made; namely, the domains of the house of Burgundy, which were, at that time, the coveted of every European sovereign.

Cornélius's gold and influence could most powerfully aid the negotiations now begun by Desquerdes, the general appointed by Louis XI. to the command of the army then encamped on the Belgian frontiers. The celebrated Marguerite's choice would be guided by the good people of Ghent and the inhabitants about her. Thus these two master-foxes were like two duelists whose arms are paralyzed by some stroke of fate.

Now, whether it was that from that day the King's health began to fail and got steadily worse, or that Cornélius did assist in bringing into France Marguerite of Burgundy—who arrived at Amboise in July 1438, to be married to the Dauphin, to whom she was betrothed in the chapel of the castle—certain it is that the King took no steps toward finding the treasure; further, he levied no tribute on his silversmith, and no trial was held; so the pair remained in a cautious condition of armed neutrality.

Happily for Cornélius, a rumor spread around Tours that his sister was proven to have been the robber; and that she had secretly been put to death by Tristan. Otherwise, and if the true history had become generally known, the whole town would have arisen as one man and hastened to destroy the Malemaison before the King could have taken means to defend it.

But, though these historical guessings may have had some foundation as regards the inaction of Louis XI., it was not so as to Cornélius Hoogworst. He was not supine. The first few days which succeeded the fatal one the silversmith spent in a ceaseless hurry. Like a carnivorous beast confined in a cage, he went and came, he smelt for gold in every cranny of his domicile; he sounded the walls; he studied the crevices; he besought the trees of the garden, the foundations of the house, the turret roofs, earth and heaven, to give back his

treasure. Often he stood motionless for hour upon hour, casting his eyes around on every side, plunging them into space. He essayed the miracles of second-sight and sorcery; he tried to see his riches through space and solids.

One overwhelming thought constantly absorbed him; he was consumed by a single desire that gnawed his vitals; he was more cruelly racked by the everlasting agony of the duel he fought with himself since his passion for gold had turned upon and rent him. It was a species of incomplete suicide, embracing all the pangs of living and dying.

Never was a vice so trapped by itself: a miser who by inadvertence locks himself in his subterranean stronghold that contains his treasure has, like Sardanapalus, the happiness of dying in its midst. But Cornélius, the robber and the robbed in one, knowing neither the secret of the one nor the other, possessed, and yet possessed not, his treasure—a novel, whimsical, but ever-continuing form of torture.

Sometimes, when he forgot himself, he would leave the little gratings of his door open, and then the passers in the street could see the little, weazened old man planted on his two legs in the middle of his untilled garden, absolutely motionless, and looking on anyone who stopped to gaze at him with a fixed, glaring stare, the luridness of which froze them with terror. If by any chance he walked about the streets of Tours, he seemed like a stranger there; he knew not where he was, nor did he know whether the sun or moon shone on him. Oftentimes he would ask his way of those he met, believing himself to be still at Ghent; everywhere he seemed on the hunt for his lost treasure.

The most perennial and the most corporeal of all human ideas—that by which man reproduces himself by creating outside and apart from himself the fictitious being known as Property—that mental demon had its claws of steel perpetually clutching at his miser-soul.

In the midst of this torture, Fear arose, with its accompanying train of sentiments. Two men possessed his secret —the one that he himself knew not. Louis XI. or Coyctier could post their spies to watch his movements when he slept, they might thus discover the unknown gulf into which he had

cast his riches, that wealth that he had watered with the life-blood of so many innocent ones: and Remorse stood beside Fear.

To prevent during his lifetime the abduction of his lost riches, during the early days after his disaster, he took every conceivable precaution to avoid sleeping; beside, his commercial relations put him in the way of procuring the most powerful anti-narcotics. His wakeful nights were most terrible, his struggles to keep awake awful—alone with night, silence, Remorse, Fear, with all the thoughts that man, instinctively it may be, has most embodied, in obedience to some moral truth, as yet devoid of certain proof.

At last, this man so powerful, his heart so calloused by politics and commerce, this genius (unknown to history), was doomed to succumb to the horrors of the torture he himself had created. Crazed by some reminiscence more agonizing than any he had as yet resisted, he cut his throat with a razor.

His death was almost exactly coincident with that of Louis XI.; thus there was nothing to restrain the violence of the mob. The populace, unrestrained, pillaged Malemaison, the Evil House. A tradition exists among the older inhabitants of Touraine that a revenue-farmer, named Bohier, had discovered the old usurer's treasure and used it in building the castle of Chenonceaux, that marvelous mansion which, in spite of the lavish wealth of several kings, and the taste of Diane de Poitiers and her rival Catherine de' Medici, remains unfinished to this day.

Happily for Marie de Sassenage, the Comte de Saint-Vallier died, as we all know, during his embassy to Venice. The family did not become extinct. After the departure of the Count the Countess gave birth to a son, whose career was famous in the history of France under the reign of King François I. He was saved by his daughter, the celebrated Diane de Poitiers, the illegitimate great-granddaughter of Louis XI., who became the morganatic wife, the adored mistress of Henry II.; for love and bastardy were hereditary in that noble family.

Château de Saché, *November and December* 1831.